

New Jersey's Every Student Succeeds State Plan (Revised 2024)

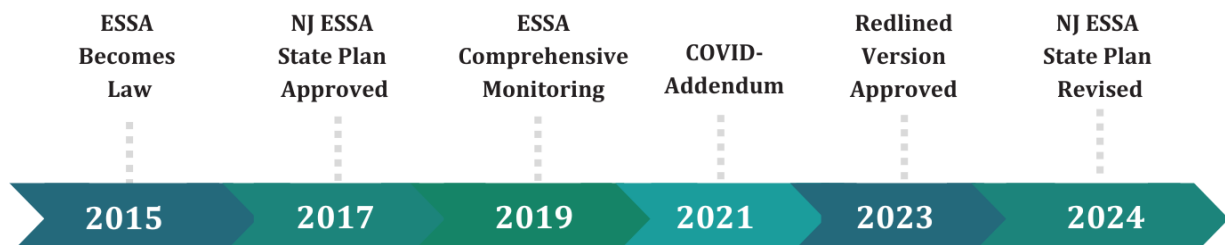
Approved May 27, 2025



New Jersey's Every Student Succeeds Act State Plan Timeline and 2024 Submission

In 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) replaced No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. The purpose of ESSA is **to provide all students the opportunity “to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education, and to close achievement gaps.”**

The 2024 ESSA State Plan is an updated version of the initial ESSA State Plan, which was approved by the United States Department of Education (USED) in 2017. In December 2023, USED approved an updated redlined amended version of the 2017 ESSA State Plan. The redlined version reflected changes related to the 2019 New Jersey Performance Review Report and corrective action plan, revisions made per the COVID-19 State Plan Addendum, and revisions made as a result of a 2017 USED Migrant Education Program monitoring and corrective action plan.



[Text Version: NJ ESSA Plan Timeline](#)

Meaningful Consultation

Throughout 2023 and 2024, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) reviewed and revised the 2017 ESSA State Plan in consultation with cross-agency staff, researchers, and New Jersey stakeholders. Stakeholders were consulted through multiple pathways. The NJDOE engaged the ESSA Stakeholder Working Group through five in-person and virtual sessions, which included representations from over 40 New Jersey organizations, including community, professional, and parent organizations. This Working Group discussed and provided feedback on the various proposals. Beginning in the fall of 2023, the NJDOE updated the Advisory Committee for Federally Funded Programs (ACFFP) every quarter and sought feedback throughout the drafting process during the spring and summer. This committee includes administrators, teachers from traditional public schools and charter schools, principals, other school leaders, parents, members of local boards of education, specialized instructional support personnel, paraprofessionals, representatives of nonpublic school children, and charter school leaders. In addition to the above opportunities, through memos and email listservs beginning in December 2023, the NJDOE invited Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) and school leaders to engage in the ESSA revision process. From July 24 through August 28, 2024, the NJDOE posted the draft 2024 ESSA State Plan in its entirety [for public review](#). See Appendix D for additional information on this process and summaries of the input received throughout the year-long engagement process including the public comment period.

USED Consolidated State Plan Template

The NJDOE utilized the “Revised State Consolidated State Plan Template” developed by USED to structure its required responses. **Blue text** is, therefore, language pulled from the federally required template, while black text and teal headings indicate NJDOE responses and/or supplemental information.

Note for People Using Screen Readers or Text-to-Speech Tools

Throughout the document, a ballot box with an "X" in it (☒) is used to indicate that a box has been checked. An empty ballot box or checkbox (☐) indicates the box has not been checked. However, it is possible that some assistive technologies may ignore these symbols. Consequently, the text "checked box" or "unchecked box" has been added to indicate the status of all ballot boxes/checkboxes. If the whole group of boxes is checked or unchecked, the group is preceded with the text "all boxes are checked" or "all boxes are unchecked."

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Date: December 4, 2024

Governor (Printed Name): Philip D. Murphy

Signature of Governor:



Date: December 4, 2024

Programs Included in the Consolidated State Plan

Instructions

Indicate below by checking the appropriate box(es) which programs the SEA included in its consolidated State plan. If an SEA elected not to include one or more of the programs below in its consolidated State plan, but is eligible and wishes to receive funds under the program(s), it must submit individual program plans for those programs that meet all statutory and regulatory requirements with its consolidated State plan in a single submission.

☒ Check this box if the SEA has included *all* of the following programs in its consolidated State plan.
[checked box]

or

If all programs are not included, check each program listed below that the SEA includes in its consolidated State plan:

- ☐ Title I, Part A: Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies
- ☐ Title I, Part C: Education of Migratory Children
- ☐ Title I, Part D: Prevention and Intervention Programs for Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk
- ☐ Title II, Part A: Supporting Effective Instruction
- ☐ Title III, Part A: English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement
- ☐ Title IV, Part A: Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants
- ☐ Title IV, Part B: 21st Century Community Learning Centers
- ☐ Title V, Part B, Subpart 2: Rural and Low-Income School Program
- ☐ Title VII, Subpart B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act: Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program (McKinney-Vento Act)

Instructions

Each SEA must provide descriptions and other information that address each requirement listed below for the programs included in its consolidated State plan. Consistent with ESEA section 8302, the Secretary has determined that the following requirements are absolutely necessary for consideration of a consolidated State plan. An SEA may add descriptions or other information, but may not omit any of the required descriptions or information for each included program.

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Introduction

ESSA’s purpose, “to ensure all students have equitable access to high-quality educational resources and opportunities, and to close educational achievement gaps,” aligns with New Jersey’s commitment to investing in and continuously improving its system of public education. The ESSA State Plan describes some of the ways New Jersey will ensure student groups who have historically been disadvantaged are provided the educational support they need to thrive. The information in the plan outlines New Jersey’s priorities and approach to ensuring success for all students.

One important way that the NJDOE can ensure all students, regardless of their zip code, demographics, or discreet learning needs, receive a high-quality education is through the ESSA accountability system described in this plan. Under ESSA, schools identified for comprehensive or targeted support receive additional fiscal support and coaching from the NJDOE. To understand the specific needs of students, identify the root causes of performance gaps, and evaluate the effectiveness of educational practices, additional data and anecdotal information is needed. Thus, the NJDOE diligently collaborates with school and LEA leaders to enhance systems of analysis and progress monitoring to support school and LEA improvement.

New Jersey has made significant strides in investing in its public schools over the past few years, prioritizing key areas to enhance education quality and student well-being. Most notably, as of 2024, the State is on pace to fully fund the New Jersey school funding formula for the first time since the law governing grades kindergarten through 12 state aid, the School Funding Reform Act, was enacted. The State will provide 11.7 billion dollars of state aid to its public schools, which accounts for over one-fifth of the entire state budget. New Jersey is a leader in its robust and student-focused education investments. With such investments comes a great responsibility to continue to deliver the highest quality education possible to all students and to ensure these resources are distributed equitably.

In addition to supporting all New Jersey students by increasing State education funding over the last several years, Governor Murphy’s administration has also prioritized the following investments:

Expansion of High-Quality Preschool

Relying on the well-established body of research that demonstrates a positive return on investment provided by a high-quality preschool education, New Jersey continues to work toward the goal of one day providing universal access to high-quality, full-day preschool for every three- and four-year-old in the State.

Focus on Student Mental Health and Wellness

Recognizing the critical role of mental health in student success, New Jersey has invested in initiatives designed to expand and diversify the number of mental health professionals in our schools and is continuously improving and expanding the large variety of professional development for New Jersey’s educators.

Support for Early Literacy and High-Dosage Tutoring

The State has prioritized high-dose tutoring and elementary literacy strategies to provide targeted support to students who are struggling academically.

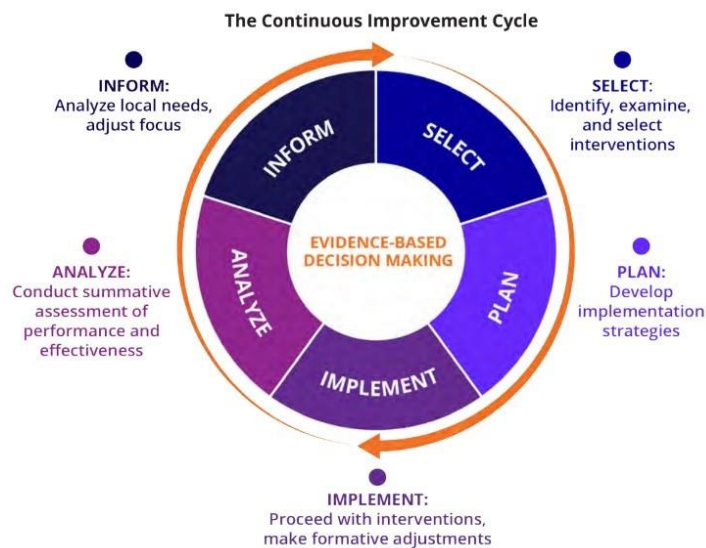
Recruitment and Retention of Diverse Educator Workforce

New Jersey continues its efforts to recruit and retain a diverse educator workforce. By actively recruiting educators from diverse backgrounds, the State aims to create inclusive learning environments where all students feel valued and supported. The NJDOE remains committed to funneling millions of dollars into grant programs supporting promising practices and programs designed to increase workforce diversity and recruit more educators to work in high-poverty LEAs.

Overall, New Jersey's investment in its public schools reflects a commitment to providing all students with access to a high-quality education and support services. By focusing on early childhood education, student mental health, early literacy, educator diversity, recruitment, and retention, the State is working to create an equitable and inclusive education system that prepares students for success in school and beyond.

The ESSA State Plan complements these priorities by focusing on how the NJDOE leverages federal funding (ESEA) to identify the schools that need more support and resources compared to all New Jersey public schools and how the NJDOE focuses resources to account for unique factors impacting a particular student demographic, such as students experiencing homelessness. The following pages reflect only the elements required in the ESSA State Plan and do not represent all NJDOE initiatives.

Throughout this plan, a few key themes should emerge. First, a critical function of the NJDOE is to identify which schools need more help supporting all their students and/or specific student groups. Then, it is the responsibility of all LEAs, with support from the NJDOE as needed, to ensure the schools and students who need the most support equitably receive those resources. School improvement is an iterative and systematic process that requires community collaboration.



[Text Version: Continuous Improvement Cycle Diagram](#)

As described later in this plan, the NJDOE approach is to work side-by-side with LEAs to identify student needs and resource gaps that may be causing performance gaps among student groups and then plan for and implement evidence-based strategies and interventions to address those needs. Alongside all relevant stakeholders, LEA and school leaders must analyze the success of such interventions and then adjust their

strategies to continually improve the school system's effectiveness. Stakeholder engagement is critical throughout the process and is federally mandated when LEAs develop plans for and implement federal programs described in this ESSA State Plan. This work is difficult. However, for diverse groups of students to thrive, communities must engage in such cycles of continuous improvement.

Second, the NJDOE is focused on continuously improving its systems and structures to ensure its services to schools, LEAs, communities, and, ultimately, New Jersey students are purposeful, efficient, and effective. For example, within this revised ESSA State Plan, NJDOE staff, in consultation with New Jersey stakeholders, have put forth research-based and data-informed changes designed to occur iteratively. As part of the revision process, NJDOE staff prioritized maintaining the elements of the state accountability and support system that are working well and offering changes to improve its systems of identification and system of support. Throughout the review process, the aim was to use fair, transparent, and meaningful metrics to identify which schools/LEAs need the most support. Finally, in alignment with all elements of this ESSA State Plan, the NJDOE remains committed to leveraging federal funding to focus additional resources on student populations who need and deserve the most assistance.

The New Jersey ESSA State Plan's Continuous Improvement Process

After many months of stakeholder engagement, the New Jersey ESSA State Plan was created and approved in 2017. Much of the accountability system described in the 2017 ESSA State Plan had yet to be fully implemented and evaluated. The NJDOE intentionally noted throughout the plan that it would engage in an ongoing continuous improvement process across all aspects of the implementation plan to ensure each element was driving the desired outcomes and still aligned with stakeholder input. Since then, the NJDOE has had to make a few adjustments to the 2017 ESSA State Plan. The 2023 redlined version reflected changes related to the [2019 New Jersey Performance Review Report](#) and corrective action plan, revisions made per the COVID-19 State Plan Addendum, and revisions made as the result of a 2017 USED Migrant Education Program monitoring and corrective action plan.

To meet its commitment to continuous improvement, the NJDOE has undergone a more significant review process over the past year. Through this review, the NJDOE and its stakeholders found that although there is room for improvement, much of the plan works well. The new plan has been written using a new, updated template. As a result, the 2024 ESSA State Plan includes important but not drastic changes, representing an ever-evolving and improving system of support. Therefore, the public can send questions and feedback regarding the 2024 ESSA State Plan through email (essa@doe.nj.gov) on an ongoing basis.

Key Changes for 2024 and Beyond

While not a complete list of all changes made throughout the plan, the following areas represent the most significant differences between the 2017 State Plan (as updated in 2023) and the 2024 ESSA State Plan.

Area	Sub-Area	2017 Plan Content	Key Modifications Reflected in the 2024 Plan	Rationale
Title IA: Eighth Grade Math Exception	Support For Advanced Mathematics Coursework in Middle School	Description of statewide professional learning support and strategies.	Updated description of statewide professional learning support, with a greater focus on ways to expand advanced mathematics options for all students.	The NJDOE will continue to support LEAs in offering greater opportunities for middle school students to enroll in advanced-level mathematics coursework.
Title IA: Assessment	Native Language Assessment	One of the three possible State-defined criteria for requiring Statewide assessments to be translated to languages other than English was: “Any native language other than English that is present in the English learner population for 3 or more years, spoken by more than 20% of the total tested student population in a given county.”	The 2024 updates remove this county-based criterion and share plans to conduct a review to analyze a policy change and re-evaluate the definition in consultation with stakeholders.	Following a review of the total number of native languages spoken by students across the State, and consultation with stakeholders, NJDOE recommends the amendment and further analysis. The county-based criterion does not provide a fair or reliable picture of the most spoken native languages other than English that are spoken Statewide.
Title IA: Accountability	Subgroups/ Throughout	“Subgroup” is a term defined in ESSA and is meant only to note groups within a larger group.	The NJDOE now refers to “subgroups” as “student groups.”	The NJDOE aims to shift to asset-based language as much as possible. This change aligns with State policies.

Area	Sub-Area	2017 Plan Content	Key Modifications Reflected in the 2024 Plan	Rationale
Title IA: Accountability	Subgroups (question “c.”)	In alignment with the Academic Achievement and Academic Progress calculations, the NJDOE intended to attribute chronic absenteeism data for a student previously identified as a multilingual learner and for four years after the student ceases to be identified as a multilingual learner to the multilingual learner student group.	The NJDOE removed this provision for the School Quality or Student Success Indicator.	This provision was included in error, and the section now accurately describes NJDOE’s current practice. It also aligns with ESSA, which does not permit states to include students previously identified as MLs in the ML student group for purposes of the School Quality Success Indicator.
Title IA: Accountability	Subgroups (question “d.”)	In its 2017 plan, NJDOE proposed that Multilingual learners transitioning from an assessment described in Section 1111(b)(2)(B)(v)(I) of ESSA in a language other than English to assessments in English will be exempted from the academic progress indicator due to potential differing language proficiencies in a language other than English and English.	The NJDOE removed this provision for the School Quality or Student Success Indicator.	This provision was included in error, and the section now accurately describes NJDOE’s current practice. It also aligns with ESSA, which does not permit states to exempt MLs from the academic progress indicator. As part of Title I assessment peer review requirements, NJDOE has demonstrated that the results for NJDOE’s Spanish and English versions of the statewide assessments are comparable.

Area	Sub-Area	2017 Plan Content	Key Modifications Reflected in the 2024 Plan	Rationale
Title IA: Long-Term Goals	Academic Goals & Graduation Rate	New Jersey set forth 12-year long-term goals.	Create future goals, separate from ESSA long-term goals, reflecting the State's ultimate goal for each indicator and for all students. New ESSA long-term goals will close the gaps between baseline performance and future goals by a set percentage every 6 years. Every 6 years, create a new long-term goal to close the gap between the new baseline and future goal.	Recommendations followed research and surveys of statewide targets in other states, a review of Statewide implementation of measuring all schools' progress toward interim targets, and a review of actual school and student group progress over the last several years. Targets would be readjusted each year to chart a path of incremental yearly progress toward long-term goals based on an LEA's most recent performance.
Title IA: Long-Term Goals	English Language	ELP growth expectations for multilingual learners increase at equal intervals each year, so all multilingual learners meet proficiency within five years of entering an LEA.	Over the next 18 months, the NJDOE will work with the Mid-Atlantic Regional Educational Lab (REL) to research the English Language Proficiency (ELP) metric and engage with a Multilingual/Bilingual advisory group.	Through this ongoing revision process, improvements to the ELP metric will be informed by research experts and practitioners so the metric provides, within the federal requirements, the best possible metric to gauge and compare progress toward English language proficiency across all schools.

Area	Sub-Area	2017 Plan Content	Key Modifications Reflected in the 2024 Plan	Rationale
Title IA: School Accountability Indicators	Academic Achievement	Percentage of students in the school who meet grade-level standards on each annual statewide assessment in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics (grades 3-8 and high school).	Explore and evaluate index-based proficiency measures in SY 2024-2025, and then report metric results for at least one year before adding them as an indicator in the ESSA accountability system. Throughout the development process, the NJDOE will seek out stakeholder feedback.	Recommendations followed research and surveys of index-based metrics in other states and settings, discussions with practitioners regarding the current metric's effects on instruction and curriculum design, and a review of actual school and student group progress over the last several years. An index-based measure of proficiency helps to better differentiate schools with students furthest away from meeting grade-level expectations and, therefore, in most need of support.
Title IA: School Accountability Indicators	Graduation Rate	Included 4- and 5-year adjusted cohort graduation rates in the accountability indicator. The weighting of indicators was 50% for 4-year and 50% for 5-year cohorts.	Added the 6-year adjusted cohort graduation rate as part of the overall graduation rate calculation. The 4-year rate would continue to account for 50% of the indicator, and the 5- and 6-year rates would account for 25% each.	This is newly available data. The NJDOE and stakeholders have wanted to consider the 6-year graduation rate; however, the data was unavailable in 2017. The 6-year graduation rate will include students receiving the additional time and help they need to complete high school.

Area	Sub-Area	2017 Plan Content	Key Modifications Reflected in the 2024 Plan	Rationale
Title IA: School Accountability Indicators	English Language Proficiency	New Jersey's ELP indicator is the percentage of multilingual learners making annual expected progress on the ACCESS for ELLs English language proficiency assessment.	The NJDOE is not proposing any changes to this metric at this time. However, it is committed to exploring alternate growth models for progress toward English language proficiency over the next few years through several initiatives, including engaging researchers and stakeholders.	The NJDOE is committed to making improvements, however it is first partnering with research organizations and expert stakeholders to most effectively improve the effectiveness of this metric.
Title IA: School Accountability Indicators	School Quality or Student Success Metric	Chronic absenteeism rates for school quality or student success under ESSA will be calculated based on the percentage of all students "in membership" for 45 or more days.	Changed the time in membership to 90 or more days.	Changed to comply with the federal definition of partial attendance.

Area	Sub-Area	2017 Plan Content	Key Modifications Reflected in the 2024 Plan	Rationale
Title IA: School Accountability Indicators	School Quality or Student Success Metric	Chronic absenteeism only rate calculated under the School Quality or Student Success Indicator.	New Jersey will add “high school persistence” as a new indicator of school quality or student success starting with the 2024-2025 school year. The indicator will initially have 0% weight in the accountability system. The NJDOE will engage with stakeholders and review data to determine the weight that will be used for the high school persistence indicator for future years and provide the adjusted weights in a future amendment to the state plan.	Including an accountability measure that credits schools for their work in keeping students engaged and enrolled will ultimately help focus attention on students who need the most support.
Title IA: Accountability	Annual Meaningful Differentiation	Annual Target Categories for academic achievement, graduation, and progress toward ELP: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target Not Met; • Target Met; • Met Goal. 	Separated the “Target Not Met” category into “No Improvement” and “Progress” to identify schools that are showing improvement: Annual Target Categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Improvement • Progress, Target not Met • Target Met • Met Goal 	This allows the NJDOE to highlight and reward continuous improvement efforts for schools that are making progress even if they have not fully met their targets.
Title I, Part A: Schools with Disproportionate Rates of Access to Educators	Disproportionate Rates of Access to Educators	Describes available educator equity data and theories of action outlined in the NJDOE’s 2015 Educator Equity Plan.	Shortened the educator equity descriptions to answer the updated USED template questions and updated educator equity data.	The updated section reflects more recent educator equity data.

Area	Sub-Area	2017 Plan Content	Key Modifications Reflected in the 2024 Plan	Rationale
Title I, Part A: Schools with Disproportionate Rates of Access to Educators	Definition of Inexperienced Teacher	Defines inexperience as an educator with fewer than 4 years of prior experience within a given LEA.	Amended definition to be, “an educator with fewer than 4 years of prior experience.”	The new definition takes into account that teachers often transition to other LEAs. Therefore, a teacher with less than 4 years of experience in a given LEA may have more years of total experience outside the LEA.
Title I, Part C: Education of Migratory Children	Full Section	Reflected the latest Service Delivery Plan as of 2017.	Updated to reflect the current SDP written in collaboration with key stakeholders.	Updated to reflect current practice per the NJDOE’s current Service Delivery Plan, adopted in June 2023 for reporting periods 2023-2024 through 2025-2026.
Title III, Part A: English Language Acquisition and Language Enhancement	Entrance and Exit Procedures	Explained the NJDOE’s entrance and exit procedures for grades K through 12.	Updated entrance and exit procedures for preschool through grade 12.	In 2023, the NJDOE amended state regulations related to services for multilingual learners. The updated description reflects current NJDOE practice, regulations, and federal requirements.
Title III, Part A: English Language Acquisition and Language Enhancement	Support for English Learner Progress	Described statewide support and the identification and exit process for identifying English learners.	Updated description of program supports, state requirements, and language to reflect New Jersey’s asset-based terminology - moving away from “English learner” to “multilingual learner.”	This section was updated to reflect current practice and to align with state law.

Area	Sub-Area	2017 Plan Content	Key Modifications Reflected in the 2024 Plan	Rationale
Title III, Part A: English Language Acquisition and Language Enhancement	Monitoring Process	Described monitoring practices and plans to consolidate monitoring processes.	Updated monitoring description. Each year, the NJDOE selects LEAs to monitor based on a Collaborative Monitoring Risk Assessment Tool designed to evaluate each LEA's aggregate risk of noncompliance with federal and state requirements.	Updated to reflect current practice.
Title VII, Subtitle B: Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program, McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act	Monitoring Process	Shared existing monitoring protocols and indicators.	The NJDOE updated the process of identifying LEAs most at risk for noncompliance with the McKinney-Vento requirements by creating an EHCY risk assessment tool.	The NJDOE continuously improves its support system to enhance compliance monitoring and support to LEAs.

Note about Language

To use asset-based language as much as possible, the NJDOE refers to “subgroups” as “student groups” and “multilingual learners” in lieu of “English learners.” Additionally, in 2024, the New Jersey State Board of Education adopted the following definition: “multilingual learner” means a student whose primary language is not English, who is identified through the process outlined in State regulations, and who is developing proficiency in multiple languages (for example, English and a primary language). The term is synonymous with “English learner” or “English language learner.”

The ESSA Acronyms table below provides the reader with some of the most used acronyms throughout the ESSA State Plan, including in the federally required template.

ESSA Acronyms

Terms	Acronym	ESSA Understanding
Elementary and Secondary Education Act	ESEA	Signed into law in 1965, it aimed to distribute money to students who experienced poverty and to support state governments.
Every Student Succeeds Act	ESSA	Signed into law in 2015, ESSA reauthorized the ESEA.
Local Educational Agency	LEA	Local-level organization that maintains administrative control of public elementary or secondary schools in a locality. LEA is used interchangeably with “district.”
State Educational Agency	SEA	State-level government organizations that oversee state public education policy and systems.
United States Department of Education	USED	Cabinet-level department of the United States government that administers and coordinates most federal assistance to education.

A. Title I, Part A: Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies (LEAs)

Title I, Part A provides federal financial assistance to LEAs and schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards. For a state to receive Title I, Part A funding, ESSA outlines various requirements that all states must meet. The ESSA Consolidated Plan asks New Jersey to report on a few of these requirements, including:

Area and Template Question Numbers	Requirement	What Must Be Included in the Plan
(1–3) Statewide Assessment	<p>Requires states to assess students under the following guidelines as well as provide an alternate assessment for students with the most significant intellectual disabilities for each subject listed below:</p> <p>ELA/Math:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each in grades 3–8; and • Once in grades 9–12 <p>Science:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once in elementary; • Once in middle; and • Once in high school <p>States must also assess annually all multilingual learners through an English language proficiency assessment.</p>	States must describe work relating to the following two assessment areas: advanced mathematics coursework and languages other than English.
(4) Statewide Accountability System and School Support and Improvement Activities	<p>States must use a set of indicators to measure the performance of all schools. Each of the following indicators is required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic proficiency; • Graduation rates for high school; • Academic growth or another statewide academic indicator for K–8; • Progress toward English language proficiency; and • At least one other State-determined indicator of school quality or student success. 	States must document the accountability system in detail.

Area and Template Question Numbers	Requirement	What Must Be Included in the Plan
(4iii) Long-Term Academic Goals	States must set long-term goals for academic proficiency, high school graduation rate, and English language proficiency.	States must provide baseline data, measurements of interim progress, and long-term goals for academic achievement, graduation rates, and English language proficiency.
Identification of Low-Performing Schools & Associated Support Strategies	States must annually identify schools in need of improvement and provide monitoring and support to ensure schools improve.	States must document the entry and exit criteria for schools in need of improvement as well as plans to monitor the identified progress and provide support.

1. Challenging State Academic Standards and Assessments

(ESEA section 1111(b)(1) and (2) and 34 CFR §§ 200.1–200.8.)

Note to reader: The footnote on page 6 of the Revised State Template for the Consolidated State Plan states, “The Secretary anticipates collecting relevant information consistent with the assessment peer review process in 34 CFR § 200.2(d). An SEA need not submit any information regarding challenging State academic standards and assessments at this time.”

2. Eighth Grade Math Exception

(ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(C) and 34 CFR § 200.5(b)(4))

- i. Does the State administer an end-of-course mathematics assessment to meet the requirements under section 1111(b)(2)(B)(v)(I)(bb) of the ESEA?
☒ **Yes [checked box]**
- ii. If a State responds “yes” to question 2(i), does the State wish to exempt an eighth grade student who takes the high school mathematics course associated with the end-of-course assessment from the mathematics assessment typically administered in eighth grade under section 1111(b)(2)(B)(v)(I)(aa) of the ESEA and ensure that:
 - a. The student instead takes the end-of-course mathematics assessment the State administers to high school students under section 1111(b)(2)(B)(v)(I)(bb) of the ESEA;
 - b. The student’s performance on the high school assessment is used in the year in which the student takes the assessment for purposes of measuring academic achievement under section 1111(c)(4)(B)(i) of the ESEA and participation in assessments under section 1111(c)(4)(E) of the ESEA;
 - c. In high school:
 1. The student takes a State-administered end-of-course assessment or nationally recognized high school academic assessment as defined in 34 CFR § 200.3(d) in mathematics that is more advanced than the assessment the State administers under section 1111(b)(2)(B)(v)(I)(bb) of the ESEA;
 2. The State provides for appropriate accommodations consistent with 34 CFR § 200.6(b) and (f); and
 3. The student’s performance on the more advanced mathematics assessment is used for purposes of measuring academic achievement under section 1111(c)(4)(B)(i) of the ESEA and participation in assessments under section 1111(c)(4)(E) of the ESEA.
☒ **Yes [checked box]**

- iii. If a State responds “yes” to question 2(ii), consistent with 34 CFR § 200.5(b)(4), describe, with regard to this exception, its strategies to provide all students in the State the opportunity to be prepared for and to take advanced mathematics coursework in middle school.

[begin NJDOE response]

Seventh and Eighth Grade Exception

The NJDOE will continue to apply the exception under section 1111(b)(2)(C) for students in grade 8 who are enrolled in advanced mathematics courses. Additionally, the NJDOE received approval of a waiver request under section 8401 of ESSA that allows grade 7 students, not just students in grade 8, to take advanced mathematics assessments in lieu of grade-level assessments. The NJDOE intends to continue seeking extensions of that waiver.

As a result of the required actions set forth in the Corrective Action Plan ([See New Jersey Performance Review Report FY 2019](#)), middle school students enrolled in an advanced mathematics course in sixth grade are required to be assessed in both the grade-level assessment and the Algebra I or Geometry course.

All students must take the Algebra I end-of-course state assessment in high school, except for those students with qualified exceptions. Qualified exceptions include students who take the Algebra I assessment in middle school and students who take the Dynamic Learning Maps assessment in high school.

Students who fall under this exception and take the Algebra I state assessment in grade 7 or grade 8 will be required to take either the Geometry or Algebra II assessment in high school. For middle school students who take both the grade-level assessment and the Algebra I assessment in grade 6, the grade-level assessment will be used for accountability purposes the year the student is in grade 6 and the Algebra I assessment will be used for accountability purposes the year the student is in grade 9.

Support for Advanced Mathematics Coursework in Middle School

The NJDOE is committed to ensuring the opportunity to access rigorous coursework is made available to students who currently do not have such access. The NJDOE will continue to support LEAs in offering greater opportunities for middle school students to enroll in advanced-level mathematics coursework, including the following activities:

1. Design, implement, and evaluate professional learning opportunities for LEAs prioritizing enrollment for educators in low-performing, high-poverty schools and high-minority schools, on the New Jersey Student Learning Standards for Mathematics in grades 3 to 6 to support a more focused approach to teaching prerequisites to Algebra 1.
2. Develop multiple model course pathways (accelerated progressions of learning) for middle schools that allow grade 8 students to complete Algebra 1 and provide pathway exemplars and professional learning opportunities to support the implementation of each model course pathway.

3. Develop multiple model course pathways (accelerated progressions of learning) for middle schools that allow grade 8 students to complete Algebra 1 and provide pathway exemplars and professional learning opportunities to support the implementation of each model course pathway.
4. Create guidance on the length and use of dedicated instructional time in mathematics, and the integration of an enrichment block that leverages an asset-based approach to addressing the differentiated needs of students in low-performing, high-poverty and/or high-minority schools.
5. Provide guidance and support for elementary mathematics specialists and middle school math instructional coaches, including evidence-based policy guidance supporting their efficacy. This may include guidance that supports their effective onboarding and resources to support their facilitation of sustained job-embedded coaching. It may also include technical assistance with prioritized enrollment for educators in low-performing, high-poverty, and high-minority schools.
6. Develop guidance for mathematics leaders on the integration of high-quality instructional materials, local formative assessment, and after-school or summer math programs that provide targeted academic support, with particular attention to the needs of low-performing, high-poverty, and/or high-minority schools.

This plan updates the description of the support for advanced mathematics coursework following a review by the NJDOE to ensure the listed supports correspond with the professional learning and technical assistance being provided by the NJDOE.

[end NJDOE response]

3. Native Language Assessments

(ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(F) and 34 CFR § 200.6(f)(2)(ii) and (f)(4)

i. Definition

Provide its definition for “languages other than English that are present to a significant extent in the participating student population,” and identify the specific languages that meet that definition.

[begin NJDOE response]

As a reminder, while ESSA uses the term “English learner” throughout, New Jersey has updated the terminology to describe students who are in the process of acquiring English language proficiency as multilingual learners.

After reviewing the input from the focus group and evaluating the criteria in the content of the changing population in New Jersey, the NJDOE is proposing the following criteria to determine the “language present to a significant extent in the participating student population,” pursuant to Section 1111(b)(2)(F) of *ESSA*:

1. The most common language other than English spoken by the tested multilingual 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 5 percent of the total tested student population overall or in a given grade span.

According to the definition above, Spanish is the only language present “to a significant extent” in New Jersey.

The above definition is an amendment to the 2017 ESSA State Plan provision that included a third criterion: “Any native language other than English that is present in the English learner population for three or more years, spoken by more than 20 percent of the total tested student population in a given county.” Based on the NJDOE’s review of student home language data since 2017 and in consultation with its ESSA Stakeholder Working Group, the NJDOE is removing this criterion. As New Jersey students’ native languages are diversifying, the county-based metric does not provide a fair picture of the most spoken native languages other than English. The NJDOE will conduct a deeper review and analysis of the policies to determine which languages are present to a significant extent in the participating test-taker population.

The NJDOE is committed to translating the Statewide assessments into additional languages to meet the needs of New Jersey’s multilingual population. Data from 2021-2022 shows that when looking at the number of students whose home language is not English, Spanish is the most spoken home language in 20 out of 21 counties. More students in Burlington County spoke Portuguese at home than Spanish. However, in the 20 other counties, six languages other than Portuguese (Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Gujarati, Korean, and Russian) were the second most common home language other than English. The NJDOE found that the county-based percentages are not a reliable enough metric when determining the

languages that are present significantly in the Statewide tested student population. While a language may be spoken by a relatively higher proportion in one county, there may be more students throughout the State speaking another language. Given the significant cost currently associated with each Statewide assessment translation, the NJDOE would like to re-evaluate this definition to identify any necessary changes that will result in the most positive impact on students across the State.

ii. Assessments

Identify any existing assessments in languages other than English, and specify for which grades and content areas those assessments are available.

[begin NJDOE response]

The NJDOE administers the state mathematics assessment in English and Spanish at all tested grade levels. In addition, the current science assessments in grades 5, 8, and 11 are currently available in Spanish.

[end NJDOE response]

iii. Languages

Indicate the languages identified in question 3(i) for which yearly student academic assessments are not available and are needed.

[begin NJDOE response]

At present, assessments are not available in languages other than English for ELA at all grade levels in which the assessments are administered.

[end NJDOE response]

iv. Development

Describe how it will make every effort to develop assessments, at a minimum, in languages other than English that are present to a significant extent in the participating student population including by providing:

- a. The State’s plan and timeline for developing such assessments, including a description of how it met the requirements of 34 CFR § 200.6(f)(4);
- b. A description of the process the State used to gather meaningful input on the need for assessments in languages other than English, collect and respond to public comment, and consult with educators; parents and families of English learners; students, as appropriate; and other stakeholders; and
- c. As applicable, an explanation of the reasons the State has not been able to complete the development of such assessments despite making every effort.

[begin NJDOE response]

As stated above, the NJDOE continues to develop and administer mathematics and science assessments in Spanish, which is present to a “significant extent in the participating student population.” This original definition was informed by stakeholders through the following process described in the 2017 ESSA State Plan:

To operationalize the definition of “languages other than English that are present to a significant extent in the participating student population,” the NJDOE convened a stakeholder focus group in August 2016. The focus group reviewed the statutory requirements for assessments in other languages and demographic data on New Jersey’s multilingual learners (e.g., languages spoken, number of multilingual learners in each language group, multilingual learners receiving accommodations during the administration of the [Statewide] assessment and multilingual learner population by county). Participants were charged with providing input on the NJDOE’s proposed definition, which was developed considering three factors:

1. Statewide data on the number and percentage of native language speakers;
2. Proposed considerations in the federal regulations; and
3. Practicability regarding assessment development (cost and timeline).

Seven years later, the NJDOE recognizes that the Statewide assessments should be translated into more languages to accommodate New Jersey students’ ever-growing linguistic diversity. The NJDOE consulted external stakeholders, such as the ESSA Stakeholder Working Group, on the abovementioned definition. Additionally, later this year, the NJDOE will convene a new stakeholder focus group with diverse expertise, including multilingual learner experts and community advocates, to review best practices and research regarding assessment translation policies. Following this convening, the NJDOE will propose

additional amendments to the ESSA State Plan, designed to increase multilingual learners’ access to Statewide assessments.

[end NJDOE response]

4. Statewide Accountability System and School Support and Improvement Activities (ESEA section 1111(c) and (d))

[begin NJDOE response]

Introduction

The purpose of ESSA is “to provide all children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education, and to close educational achievement gaps.” The ESSA accountability system helps the NJDOE operationalize its efforts to achieve this goal. The NJDOE, in consultation with stakeholders and in compliance with federal law, has designed and implemented this tool to identify schools needing the most intensive support, including additional fiscal support and coaching provided by the NJDOE Division of Field Support and Services staff. In other words, by including all students in each of its indicators or metrics, this system helps the NJDOE to, at a high level, gauge how all students are doing in all schools across the State. The NJDOE uses this high-level snapshot to help focus the State’s limited resources on student populations most in need of assistance. For such support to have the maximum impact, the accountability system must work to differentiate school performance on meaningful metrics that, at a very high level, create a snapshot of New Jersey’s over 2,500 public schools.

The NJDOE remains committed to identifying research-based and reliable metrics that when taken together, provide the most comprehensive and fair view of student performance. To implement this system well, the NJDOE consistently relies on input from stakeholders from all corners of the educational community and works to continuously improve the quality and effectiveness of each metric and the accountability system as a whole. Since 2016, the NJDOE engaged stakeholders to develop the ESSA accountability system described in its 2017 ESSA State Plan. After multiple years of implementation, the NJDOE convened a cross-agency focus group and an external 2024 ESSA Stakeholder Working Group to collaborate and review New Jersey’s ESSA Accountability system. The NJDOE, in collaboration with stakeholders, has been measuring the system’s strengths and areas for improvement against the following guiding principles:

Guiding Principles

Measure what matters	Use best available metrics, while accounting for inherent limitations of data	Make changes through an iterative process
Provide a comprehensive view of school performance	Differentiate among schools as fairly as possible	Adhere to Federal and State laws

- Measure what matters
- Provide a comprehensive view of school performance
- Use best available metrics, while accounting for inherent limitations of data
- Differentiate among schools as fairly as possible
- Make changes through an iterative process
- Adhere to Federal and State laws

Importantly, such a high-level snapshot of school performance carries inherent limitations as there are countless, immeasurable school-day factors that help students thrive. Each student, school, and community is unique. With this individuality comes individualized needs. However, the ESSA accountability “snapshot” enables the NJDOE to efficiently differentiate among the more than 2,500 schools in the State to create a starting point for the NJDOE to work more deeply with schools that are identified as in need of more support. However, more and different types of data, as shown in the iceberg figure below, are required to evaluate the unique needs of individual students and student groups in all schools. For example, to help students learn and thrive in school, educators work tirelessly to review coursework, formative and benchmark assessments, classroom behavior, gather parental and colleague insights, and many additional data points to provide all students with high-quality instruction and specific, tiered supports as needed. School leaders engage stakeholders, review attendance trends, benchmark and local assessments, survey educators, students, and parents, and evaluate resources when determining the best curriculum and programs for their schools.

Finally, ESSA school accountability is just one, albeit important, component of New Jersey’s systems of accountability and oversight to ensure that all students in New Jersey receive a high-quality education. For example, additional accountability systems include the NJDOE’s federal monitoring processes; charter school program review; LEA accountability (New Jersey Quality School Accountability Continuum or NJQSAC); and LEA and school reporting through the annual School Performance Reports. To continuously improve the effectiveness of its support, the NJDOE, since 2017, has been working to align and connect, wherever possible, these different systems. Through continued staff collaboration, connections across various accountability and support systems remain top priorities for the NJDOE staff.



Data used to identify schools for comprehensive or targeted support according to ESSA.

Data needed to understand the specific needs of students, identify root causes of performance gaps, evaluate effectiveness of educational practices, etc.

[Text Version: Iceberg Data Analogy](#)

Through this process and a review of several cohorts of schools identified for comprehensive or targeted support, the NJDOE, in consultation with various stakeholders, identified some specific improvements to the ESSA accountability system. These changes are not exhaustive, and through rigorous processes of continuous improvement, the NJDOE plans to continually evaluate and improve the ESSA accountability system.

The following sections describe New Jersey’s ESSA accountability system, identification process, and system of support, which include specific improvements since the plan was first approved in 2017. Such changes will be made incrementally through an iterative and thoughtful process. The NJDOE remains committed to continually evaluating and improving how the State can meaningfully differentiate its over 2,500 schools to ensure its concentrated resources and supports go where they are most needed.

[\[end NJDOE response\]](#)

i. Subgroups (ESEA section 1111(c)(2))

[\[begin NJDOE response\]](#)

As stated above, to use asset-based language as much as possible, the NJDOE refers to “subgroups” as “student groups” and “multilingual learners” in lieu of “English learners.” State regulations (N.J.A.C. 6A:15) now define “multilingual learner” as “a student whose primary language is not English, who is identified through the process outlined in [State regulations], and who is developing proficiency in multiple languages (for example, English and a primary language). The term is synonymous with ‘English learner’ or ‘English language learner’.” When quoting ESEA, federal documents, or the 2017 ESSA State Plan, “subgroups” and “English learners” may still be used throughout this document.

The NJDOE is currently not proposing substantive changes to its student group accountability policies. Differences between this section and Section 4B of the 2017 ESSA State Plan can be attributed to formatting, template changes, and updated nomenclature as described above. Also, in two instances, the 2017 ESSA State Plan (pages 75 and 77) mentions the intent of the NJDOE to make waiver-dependent changes to the students with disabilities student group. Such amendments were not implemented, and a review of available data showed no meaningful or measurable differences in the data quality if the waiver had been granted.

[\[end NJDOE response\]](#)

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- a. List each major racial and ethnic group the State includes as a subgroup of students, consistent with ESEA section 1111(c)(2)(B).
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[\[begin NJDOE response\]](#)

The NJDOE will continue to use the following racial and ethnic groups for purposes of reporting:

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander
- Black or African American
- Hispanic/Latino
- White
- Two or more races

These racial and ethnic student groups are consistent with the requirements for federal reporting according to the most recent federal guidance published in the Federal Register (72 Fed. Reg. 59267). For purposes of the State accountability system and reporting, the NJDOE will also consider the performance of economically disadvantaged students (defined as federally eligible for free or reduced-price lunch), students with disabilities, and multilingual learners.

In accordance with federal guidance, each student in a school must be classified as exactly one major racial or ethnic group. In addition to identifying with a major racial or ethnic group, a student may be classified as a member of one or more of the other student groups: students with disabilities, multilingual learners, and/or economically disadvantaged students.

New Jersey is focused on closing the large gaps in performance between student groups. The NJDOE will use ESSA accountability system elements to focus schools and LEAs on this critical goal. Two components of the school accountability system that drive this work are:

1. Selecting as small of an n -size (the minimum number of students required to report an outcome) as possible that provides accurate data to ensure schools are held accountable for the performance of all students; and
2. Factoring student group performance prominently into each measure. To ensure the meaningful inclusion of student groups in school accountability calculations, the NJDOE will give each student group for which a school meets the n -size (at least 20 students) equal weight in a school's "student group score" for applicable indicators. The student group score, which will be the average of all individual student group scores, will be weighted equally with a school's overall score for all students to determine the final score for each indicator (except the Progress toward English language proficiency). By weighting all student groups equally in the student group score and weighting overall and student group scores equally in indicator calculations, the NJDOE is committed to ensuring its ESSA school accountability system does not unintentionally ignore school-level gaps in performance by one or more student groups.

[end NJDOE response]

-
- b. If applicable, describe any additional subgroups of students other than the statutorily required subgroups (i.e., economically disadvantaged students, students from major racial and ethnic groups, children with disabilities, and English learners) used in the Statewide accountability system.
-

[begin NJDOE response]

At this time, the NJDOE does not include additional student groups other than the statutorily required student groups in its statewide accountability system.

[end NJDOE response]

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- c. Does the State intend to include in the English learner subgroup the results of students previously identified as English learners on the State assessments required under ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(B)(v)(I) for purposes of State accountability (ESEA section 1111(b)(3)(B))? Note that a student's results may be included in the English learner subgroup for not more than four years after the student ceases to be identified as an English learner.

☒ Yes [checked box]

[begin NJDOE response]

Academic Achievement (Proficiency) and Academic Progress (Growth)

With respect to a student previously identified as a multilingual learner, and for not more than four years after the student ceases to be identified as one, the NJDOE will attribute the results of the assessments described in Section 1111(b)(2)(B)(v)(I) of ESSA to the multilingual learner student group.

Graduation Rate

Students will be included in the graduation rate calculation as part of the multilingual learner student group if they were identified as a multilingual learner at any time while in high school.

[end NJDOE response]

-
- d. If applicable, choose one of the following options for recently arrived English learners in the State:
- ☒ Applying the exception under ESEA section 1111(b)(3)(A)(i) [checked box]; or
 - ☐ Applying the exception under ESEA section 1111(b)(3)(A)(ii) [unchecked box]; or
 - ☐ Applying the exception under ESEA section 1111(b)(3)(A)(i) or under ESEA section 1111(b)(3)(A)(ii). If this option is selected, describe how the State will choose which exception applies to a recently arrived English learner. [unchecked box]

[begin NJDOE response]

All multilingual learners in grades 3 through 12 will participate in the statewide assessment in ELA and mathematics at the age-appropriate grade level or in the appropriate end-of-course assessment with the following exception: Any multilingual learner enrolling in a U.S. school after June 1 of the prior school year will be exempt from one administration of the ELA assessment described in Section 1111(b)(2)(B)(v)(I) of ESSA in the current year.

Additionally, for any student, not just multilingual learners, who enrolls in a school for the first time after December 1 of a school year, the NJDOE will exclude the results of the ELA and mathematics assessments described in Section 1111(b)(2)(B)(v)(I) of ESSA from the measures used to calculate a school's performance on the academic achievement and academic growth indicators.

[end NJDOE response]

ii. Minimum *N*-Size (ESEA section 1111(c)(3)(A))

[begin NJDOE response]

The NJDOE is not proposing substantive changes to its *n*-size accountability policies. Differences between this section and Section 4B of the 2017 ESSA State Plan can be attributed to formatting, template changes, and updated nomenclature as described above. Further the policies and decisions in this section were not reconsidered during the 2023-2024 review period.

[end NJDOE response]

-
- a. Provide the minimum number of students that the State determines are necessary to be included to carry out the requirements of any provisions under Title I, Part A of the ESEA that require disaggregation of information by each subgroup of students for accountability purposes.
-

[begin NJDOE response]

Minimum *n*-size for school accountability: 20

As required under ESSA, the NJDOE's *n*=20 threshold will be used for all students and all student groups in all schools and is the same for every indicator.

[end NJDOE response]

-
- b. Describe how the minimum number of students is statistically sound.
-

[begin NJDOE response]

The NJDOE and its stakeholders maintain that it is critical to focus New Jersey’s collective efforts on closing the performance gaps among student groups. To ensure that each school is focused on this effort and held accountable for all students, the NJDOE selected the lowest n -size that will still provide statistically reliable results. Since all measures must use the same minimum n -size, the NJDOE based the n -size on the analyses conducted for student growth percentiles (SGP) because SGP is the ESSA school accountability indicator subject to the most fluctuation. SGP data was analyzed as part of the AchieveNJ educator evaluation system implementation using Monte Carlo statistical simulations. Results indicated that a minimum n -size of approximately 17 students would meet the minimum stability threshold recommended by the NJDOE’s technical advisory committee. Thus, the NJDOE determined that 20 would be an appropriate minimum n -size for SGP. While a lower n -size would include more students, it would also sacrifice year-to-year reliability. Therefore, an n -size of 20 creates the optimal balance between reliability and representativeness.

[end NJDOE response]

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- c. Describe how the minimum number of students was determined by the State, including how the State collaborated with teachers, principals, other school leaders, parents, and other stakeholders when determining such minimum number.
-

[begin NJDOE response]

To ensure stakeholders had an opportunity to provide the NJDOE with input on this issue, members of the initial 2016-2017 ESSA Stakeholder Advisory Group were provided multiple opportunities before and after the NJDOE publicly proposed an n -size of 20 to ask questions, to debate among the members, and to provide in-person feedback. Additionally, the description of the proposal was provided publicly through an easy-to-read PowerPoint presentation, within live and recorded webinars, translated into Spanish, and discussed with parents and educators at various roundtable conversations, as well as presented to LEA leaders across the state. The NJDOE received recommendations from various organizations such as to further lower the n -size to 10 or to maintain New Jersey’s then-current n -size of 30. An n -size of 20 not only represents the optimal balance between reliability and representativeness as shared above, but it also serves as a reasonable compromise in terms of stakeholder feedback.

[end NJDOE response]

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- d. Describe how the State ensures that the minimum number is sufficient to not reveal any personally identifiable information.
-

[begin NJDOE response]

The NJDOE’s [Data Security and Privacy Policy](#) outlines how the NJDOE protects the privacy of student data collected, used, shared, and stored by the State. In addition, the NJDOE applies suppression rules to

all public reports, including accountability data reports. The NJDOE takes its obligation to protect individual-level student and staff data very seriously and works to continuously make improvements to data security and privacy practices across the agency.

[end NJDOE response]

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- e. If the State's minimum number of students for purposes of reporting is lower than the minimum number of students for accountability purposes, provide the State's minimum number of students for purposes of reporting.
-

[begin NJDOE response]

The NJDOE plans to use $n=10$ as the minimum threshold for the purpose of reporting. As a matter of longstanding policy, the NJDOE has used $n=10$ as the State's reporting n -size. The NJDOE received extensive stakeholder feedback suggesting that the NJDOE continue the practice of reporting data at the smallest n -size that would protect student privacy.

[end NJDOE response]

iii. Establishment of Long-Term Goals (ESEA Section 1111(c)(4)(A))

[begin NJDOE response]

Introduction to Long-Term Goals

ESSA requires all states to establish long-term goals and interim targets for each school and student group in three areas: academic achievement, graduation rate, and progress toward English language proficiency. Each long-term goal must be both ambitious and achievable. In alignment with the central purpose of ESSA, which is to “close educational achievement gaps,” State goals and measurements of interim targets must be designed so that if achieved, gaps in student group performance will be eliminated. While the long-term goals must be the same for all schools and student groups, the trajectory for each school can be different depending on the starting point, and therefore, interim goals vary by school and student group.

Each proposed long-term goal has annual interim targets to provide guideposts to schools and LEAs in determining if steady progress is being made toward the long-term goal. These long-term goals and interim targets factor into the school accountability system in two key ways:

- ✓ Long-term goals will be displayed on school, LEA, and state performance reports; and
- ✓ Long-term goals will be factored into New Jersey’s identification of schools with one or more “consistently underperforming” student groups (defined in section A.4.vi below) for targeted support and improvement. If a school has a student group that consistently misses the annual (interim) targets and the student group performs below the state average on other indicators of school success, the school will be considered in need of support.

Figure A.1: Key Long-Term Goal Changes from 2017 to 2024

Topic	2017 ESSA State Plan	2024 ESSA State Plan
Timeline	12 years; Annual targets were set for 2016-2017 through 2029-2030.	6 years; Establishes new “future goals.”
Rate of Increase	Annual targets were set based on 25% goal progress in 5 years, 60% goal progress in 10 years, and 100% progress in 13 years. The amount of annual progress increases over time.	Reduce the distance between baseline performance and the future goals by a set percentage every 6 years (e.g. 20% for academic proficiency and 25% for graduation).
Achievability	Due to the rigidity of the 12-year targets, schools that missed annual targets at the beginning are likely to never meet an interim target, even if, in later years, the school demonstrates growth at or above the expected rate of change.	Provides the State flexibility to adjust every 6 years based on actual baseline data, which promotes urgency and focuses on closing gaps because the shorter-term and adjustable annual targets are more achievable.

Topic	2017 ESSA State Plan	2024 ESSA State Plan
English language proficiency	The measurements of interim progress, or annual targets, for each school will represent an annual 1% increase over the baseline, which is the amount of annual progress necessary to reach the long-term goal in 6 years. Note, the actual long-term goals have been adjusted due to changes in the baseline data. Those changes are reflected in the current 2017 ESSA State Plan redlined changes.	No change other than to align to the 6-year timeline. The NJDOE will continue its review and evaluate this metric in consultation with stakeholders and researchers to ensure it is ambitious but achievable.

Background

For the development of the 2017 ESSA State Plan, the NJDOE in consultation with stakeholders, set forth the following 12-year long-term goals:

1. For academic achievement, 80 percent of students will meet or exceed grade-level expectations on the statewide assessments for English language arts, or ELA, and mathematics;
2. For graduation, 95 percent of students will graduate within four years and 96 percent of students will graduate within five years.

For the current plan, New Jersey’s progress toward English language proficiency long-term goals were updated. For this indicator, schools or LEAs that serve grades up to and including grade 5 have a long-term goal of 65.7 percent of students meeting expected annual progress toward attaining English language proficiency. All other schools/LEAs, such as those that contain grades past grade 5, have a long-term goal of 51.8 percent.

The date by which the State would meet its long-term goals was initially 2030, but that was shifted to 2032 due to the changes in the approved COVID-19 State Plan Addendum.

Continuous Improvement: Review and Revise

Since 2017, the NJDOE staff have been reviewing and evaluating whether New Jersey’s original long-term goals are ambitious yet achievable; researching alternative models of measuring long-term and interim growth; and assessing the effectiveness of the long-term goals when differentiating among all of New Jersey’s public schools. To continuously improve New Jersey’s accountability system, this section of the 2024 ESSA State Plan includes multiple changes to its long-term goals and measurements of interim progress to ensure that New Jersey’s goals continue to be realistic and achievable for schools while remaining ambitious.

Key Updates Since 2017

First, the NJDOE established new “future goals” that better capture the State’s true goals for all students and align with ESSA’s purpose to provide “all students significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education.” For example, and as described below, New Jersey’s future goal is for all students to meet or exceed expectations on the statewide ELA and mathematics assessments. The new long-term goals will track schools’ progress in closing the gaps between baseline performance and the future goal by a set percentage over six years. Additionally, for academic achievement and graduation

rate, within the six-year period while a school is progressing toward its next long-term goal, annual measurements of interim progress will be initially set based on the annual amount of progress required to reach the long-term goal in six years, with progress equally distributed across the six years. Each year, the annual targets for the remaining years will be reviewed. If a school has not met their annual target for a given year, the remaining annual targets through year five will be adjusted to reflect the annual amount of progress required to reach the long-term goal in the remaining years.

This is an improvement from the 2017 ESSA State Plan proficiency long-term goals that were based on the expectation that each school and each student group would achieve 80 percent proficiency by 2030. To achieve the long-term goals, the amount of expected annual progress increases over time.

[end NJDOE response]

a. Academic Achievement

(ESEA section 1111(c)(4)(A)(i)(I)(aa))

1. Describe the long-term goals for improved academic achievement, as measured by proficiency on the annual statewide reading/language arts and mathematics assessments, for all students and for each subgroup of students, including: (i) baseline data; (ii) the timeline for meeting the long-term goals, for which the term must be the same multi-year length of time for all students and for each subgroup of students in the State; and (iii) how the long-term goals are ambitious.
2. Provide the measurements of interim progress toward meeting the long-term goals for academic achievement in Appendix A.
3. Describe how the long-term goals and measurements of interim progress toward the long-term goals for academic achievement take into account the improvement necessary to make significant progress in closing statewide proficiency gaps.

[begin NJDOE response]

Baseline and Long-Term Goals

New Jersey has set the following **future goals** for academic achievement:

- One hundred percent of all students and each student group will meet or exceed expectations on the statewide ELA assessments.
- One hundred percent of all students and each student group will meet or exceed expectations on the statewide mathematics assessments.

From these future goals, New Jersey has set its ESSA Long-Term Goals to close the gaps between baseline performance and the future goals by 20 percent every six years. After six years, the NJDOE will set new long-term goals to close the gap between the new baseline and future goal by 20 percent for the next six years.

Each school and student group will have one long-term goal for ELA and one long-term goal for mathematics. This is based on performance in grades 3 through 8 and the required high school assessments. This includes students taking the New Jersey Student Learning Assessment (NJSLA) and Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) assessments, which are designed for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. For ELA, this includes grade-level assessments in grades 3 through 9 (and grade 11 for DLM). For mathematics, this includes grade-level assessments in grades 3 through 8 and end-of-course mathematics assessments in middle school and high school (and grade 11 for DLM).

The required high school mathematics assessment is the NJSLA Algebra I assessment. All students must take the Algebra I end-of-course state assessment in high school, except for those students with qualified exceptions. Qualified exceptions include students who take the Algebra I assessment in middle school and students who take the Dynamic Learning Maps assessment in high school. Students who take the Algebra I assessment in grades 7 or 8 must take either the Geometry or Algebra II assessment in high school, and students who take the Algebra I assessment in grade 6 are required to take both the grade level assessment and the Algebra I assessment in grade 6. The Algebra I assessment results will be used the year the student is in grade 9.

The performance measure used for the academic achievement long-term goals is aligned with New Jersey's measure of academic achievement, which is based on the overall performance of all students in the school. Separate annual targets are not calculated for individual grade levels or end-of-course assessments.

The NJDOE will use assessment data from the 2022-2023 school year as a baseline for calculating the long-term goals for academic achievement. As part of its process in determining an appropriate long-term goal, the NJDOE reviewed historical statewide assessment data from 2015-2016 to the present. Data from the 2015-2016 school year was used as a baseline for New Jersey's original long-term goals in the 2017 ESSA State Plan. Students meet or exceed expectations on the statewide assessments or demonstrate grade-level proficiency if they achieve a performance level of 4 or 5 on the NJSLA assessment or a performance level of 3 or 4 on the DLM assessment.

In the 2015-2016 school year, 51.6 percent of students statewide met or exceeded expectations on the statewide assessment for ELA. In mathematics, 42.3 percent of students demonstrated grade-level proficiency on the statewide assessments. By the 2018-2019 school year, the last complete year of testing before pandemic disruptions, there were significant increases in the percentages of students meeting grade-level proficiency compared to the 2015-2016 school year, with 57.9 percent of students meeting expectations in ELA and 44.5 percent of student meeting expectations in mathematics. Increases in performance between 2015-2016 and 2018-2019 were seen across all student groups. These increases indicate progress toward closing achievement gaps.

However, while all student groups saw increases in performance from the 2015-2016 school year to the 2018-2019 school year, large gaps remain in performance across student groups. In the 2018-2019 school year, only 22.7 percent of students with disabilities met grade-level expectations for ELA, compared to 65.1 percent of students without disabilities.

In 2022-2023, the first year of assessments following pandemic cancellations in 2019-2020 and 2021-2022, 49 percent of students met grade-level expectations for ELA, and 36 percent of students met grade-level expectations for mathematics. To address the impacts of the pandemic and the gaps in performance

across the student groups, the NJDOE seeks to redefine the ESSA long-term goals while still maintaining ambitious but achievable goals for schools and students.

ESSA requires states to set long-term academic goals that are the same for all schools. In New Jersey, which has a wide range of baseline data, it is quite challenging to set an appropriate one-size-fits-all goal for schools that pushes each school to continue to perform while ensuring that all schools have a reasonable target. By redefining goals in terms of “future goals” and adjusting ESSA long-term goals every six years to reflect the most recent baseline data, the NJDOE can better account for these differences and push each school to achieve ambitious goals on a unique and achievable timeline.

The future, or ultimate, goal is that 100 percent of all students will meet grade-level expectations. The NJDOE recognizes that it may take many years to reach this goal, and different schools and student groups will require different amounts of time to reach this goal. To set realistic, but still ambitious, goals for each school and student group, the NJDOE will define ESSA long-term goals to close the gaps between baseline performance and the future goal by 20 percent over six years.

The NJDOE has chosen six years to highlight the urgency of closing these gaps in performance and ensuring that all students achieve academic excellence. The NJDOE believes that it is important to set goals that provide the time needed for schools and LEAs to make changes that result in measurable improvement. It is also important to set goals that convey urgency, so our schools and LEAs see the need to address current gaps. The six-year timeline aligns with the three-year identification and exit cycles, so long-term goals will be set for years, during which performance data will be used to identify and exit schools.

These goals will be defined uniquely for each school and student group based on the school or student group’s individual baseline performance from the 2022-2023 school year. Because the long-term goals are based on individual baseline data, a school or student group with a lower percentage of students meeting grade-level expectations in the 2022-2023 school year will require more improvement to meet the long-term goals than schools and student groups with higher percentages of students meeting grade-level expectations at baseline. If the ESSA long-term goals were achieved in six years, the gaps between student groups would significantly reduce.

For example, in the 2022-2023 school year, 51.3 percent of all students and 19.2 percent of students with disabilities met grade-level expectations in ELA. The state-level ESSA long-term goals for the 2028-2029 school year would be for 61 percent of all students and 35.4 percent of students with disabilities to meet grade-level expectations in ELA. If these goals are achieved, the gap between these two groups would reduce from 32.1 percentage points to 25.6 percentage points. While both of these student groups saw improvements in the percentage of students meeting grade-level expectations from the 2015-2016 school year to the 2018-2019 school year, the gap in performance between these two student groups only decreased by 1.8 percentage points.

Every six years, new long-term goals for the next six years will be set using the most recent year as a new baseline. This means that data for the 2028-2029 school year will be used for the next baseline, and a new ESSA long-term goal will be set for 2034-2035.

The following table shows the baseline 2022-2023 statewide assessment results for ELA and mathematics and the corresponding long-term goals.

Figure A.2: Baseline and Long-term Academic Proficiency Goals (Percent Meeting or Exceeding Expectations)

Student Group	Baseline ELA Performance: 2022-2023	Long-Term Goal ELA: 2028-2029	Baseline Mathematics Performance: 2022-2023	Long-Term Goal Mathematics: 2028-2029
All students	51.3 %	61.0%	38.2 %	50.6 %
Economically disadvantaged students	33.4 %	46.7%	19.5 %	35.6 %
Students with disabilities	19.2 %	35.4%	15.7 %	32.6 %
Multilingual learners	23.9 %	39.1%	18.1 %	34.5 %
American Indian or Alaska Native	52.7 %	62.2%	40.1 %	52.1 %
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	79.8%	83.8%	73.1%	78.5%
Black or African American	34.0 %	47.2%	17.9 %	34.3 %
Hispanic or Latino	37.3 %	49.8%	22.2 %	37.8 %
White	60.7 %	68.6%	48.7 %	59.0 %
Two or More Races	58.2 %	66.6%	46.4 %	57.1 %

Measurements of Interim Progress

The measurements of interim progress, or annual targets, for each school and each student group will be set based on each school's and each student group's unique baseline performance and long-term goal. The annual targets for years one through five will be initially set based on the annual amount of progress required to reach the long-term goal in six years, with progress equally distributed across the six years. For example, if a student group has a baseline performance of 50 percent proficiency in 2022-2023, the long-term ESSA goal for the 2028-2029 school year would be 60 percent, representing a 20 percent reduction in the gap between the baseline performance and 100 percent proficiency. The annual targets for years one through five would be based on a yearly increase of 1.7 percent.

Figure A.3: Example Student Group Long-Term (6-year) Goal and Interim Progress/Annual Targets

Student Group	2022-2023 Baseline Performance	2023-2024 Target (Year 1)	2024-2025 Target (Year 2)	2025-2026 Target (Year 3)	2026-2027 Target (Year 4)	2027-2028 Target (Year 5)	2028-2029 Goal (Year 6)
Example	50%	51.7%	53.3%	55.0%	56.7%	58.3%	60%

Each year, the annual targets for the remaining years will be reviewed. If a school has not met their annual target for a given year, the remaining annual targets through year five will be adjusted to reflect the annual amount of progress required to reach the long-term goal in the remaining years. If annual

targets are met, the subsequent annual targets will remain the same. This process results in more realistic annual targets but keeps the same ambitious long-term goals.

For example, if the student group in the previous example had 50 percent of students meeting grade-level expectations for the 2023-2024 school year (year one), the target of 51.7 percent would not be met. The remaining annual targets for years two through five would be readjusted to reflect the annual amount of progress required to reach the long-term goal in the remaining years. This would mean that the annual yearly increase for years two through five would be increased to 2 percent, but the original year two target would be reduced from 53.3 percent to 52 percent. This gives a more realistic trajectory for the student group to meet the long-term goal but keeps the goal itself the same.

Figure A.4: Updated Long-term (6-year) Goal and Annual Targets For Example Student Group from Figure A.3

2022-2023 Baseline Performance	2023- 2024 Target (Year 1)	2023-2024 Actual Year 1 Performance	2024-2025 Updated Target (Year 2)	2025-2026 Updated Target (Year 3)	2026-2027 Updated Target (Year 4)	2027-2028 Updated Target (Year 5)	2028- 2029 Goal (Year 6)
50%	51.7%	50.0%	52.0%	54.0%	56.0%	58.0%	60%

See Appendix A for charts demonstrating the initial state-level annual academic achievement targets for ELA and mathematics. Each school's interim targets are posted annually on the [NJDOE's Accountability webpage](#). As described above, annual targets may be adjusted based on actual performance during the six-year period, but long-term goals will remain the same.

[end NJDOE response]

b. Graduation Rate. (ESEA section 1111(c)(4)(A)(i)(I)(bb))

1. Describe the long-term goals for the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate for all students and for each subgroup of students, including:
 - i. baseline data;
 - ii. the timeline for meeting the long-term goals, for which the term must be the same multi-year length of time for all students and for each subgroup of students in the State; and
 - iii. how the long-term goals are ambitious.
2. If applicable, describe the long-term goals for each extended-year adjusted cohort graduation rate, including:
 - i. baseline data;
 - ii. the timeline for meeting the long-term goals, for which the term must be the same multi-year length of time for all students and for each subgroup of students in the State;

- iii. how the long-term goals are ambitious; and
 - iv. how the long-term goals are more rigorous than the long-term goal set for the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate.
3. Provide the measurements of interim progress toward the long-term goals for the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate and any extended-year adjusted cohort graduation rate in Appendix A.
 4. Describe how the long-term goals and measurements of interim progress for the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate and any extended-year adjusted cohort graduation rate take into account the improvement necessary to make significant progress in closing statewide graduation rate gaps.

[begin NJDOE response]

Baseline and Long-Term Goals

The NJDOE has set the following **future goals** for graduation:

- Ninety-five percent of all students and each student group will graduate within four years of entering high school.
- Ninety-six percent of all students and each student group will graduate within five years of entering high school.
- Ninety-seven percent of all students and each student group will graduate within six years of entering high school.

From these future goals, New Jersey has set its ESSA long-term goals to close the gaps between baseline performance and future goals by 25 percent every six years. After six years, the NJDOE will set new long-term goals to close the gap between the new baseline and future goal by 25 percent based on the most recent cohort data.

The NJDOE will use Cohort 2022 graduation rates as a baseline for calculating the long-term goals for four-year, five-year, and six-year graduation rates. The NJDOE chose to use Cohort 2022 as the baseline for the calculation because the State's graduation assessment requirement was in effect for the class of 2022 after being waived for both the class of 2020 and the class of 2021. Following the 2019 Performance Review process with USED, the NJDOE changed how the federal adjusted cohort graduation rate was calculated starting in 2021. Under ESSA, students with disabilities who did not meet all graduation requirements (course, attendance, and/or assessment requirements based on year of graduation) due to modifications or exemptions in their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) cannot be included as graduates (in the numerator) in the federal version of the graduation rate. Therefore, Cohort 2022 will serve as a baseline that reflects both the modified federal calculation of the adjusted cohort graduation rate and a year where all graduation requirements were in place.

These long-term goals are ambitious because, if achieved, they would reduce gaps in graduation rates between student groups, which have existed since New Jersey started using the adjusted cohort graduation rate calculation in 2011.

For Cohort 2022, the statewide four-year graduation rate for all students was 85.2 percent. The four-year graduation rate for students with disabilities was 48.5 percent. The long-term goal for Cohort 2028's four-year graduation rate is 87.7 percent for all students and 60.1 percent for students with disabilities. If achieved, this would reduce the gap between all students and the students with disabilities student group from 36.7 percentage points to 27.6 percentage points.

The long-term goals for the five-year and six-year graduation rates are more rigorous because they have progressively higher future goals. This results in the five-year long-term goals for a given cohort always being higher than the four-year long-term goals for the same cohort. Similarly, the six-year long-term goals for a given cohort will always be higher than the five-year long-term goals for the same cohort.

The following table shows the baseline four-year, five-year, and six-year graduation rates for Cohort 2022 at the state level and the corresponding long-term goals.

Figure A.5: Baseline and Long-Term Goals for Four-year, Five-year, and Six-year Graduation Rates

Student Group	Baseline 4-Year Graduation Rate: Cohort 2022	Long-Term Goal 4-Year Graduation Rate: Cohort 2028	Baseline 5-Year Graduation Rate: Cohort 2022	Long-Term Goal 5-Year Graduation Rate: Cohort 2028	Baseline 6-Year Graduation Rate: Cohort 2022	Long-Term Goal 6-Year Graduation Rate: Cohort 2028
All students	85.2%	87.7%	86.9%	89.2%	87.0%	89.5%
Economically disadvantaged students	78.7%	82.8%	81.2%	84.9%	81.4%	85.3%
Students with disabilities	48.5%	60.1%	51.4%	62.6%	51.8%	63.1%
Multilingual learners	70.3%	76.5%	75.4%	80.6%	75.7%	81.0%
American Indian or Alaska Native	84.8%	87.4%	86.4%	88.8%	86.4%	89.1%
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	95.9%	95%	96.6%	96%	96.6%	96.7%
Black or African American	77.8%	82.1%	80.5%	84.4%	80.8%	84.9%
Hispanic or Latino	79.3%	83.2%	81.8%	85.4%	82.1%	85.8%
White	89.1%	90.6%	89.9%	91.4%	90.0%	91.8%
Two or More Races	84.3%	87.0%	85.9%	88.4%	86.2%	88.9%

Measurements of Interim Progress

The measurements of interim progress, or annual targets, for each school and each student group, will be set based on each school's and each student group's unique baseline performance and long-term goal. The

annual targets for years one through five will initially be determined based on the annual amount of progress required to reach the long-term goal in six years, with progress equally distributed across the six years. These annual targets would be calculated using the same methodology for four-year, five-year, and six-year graduation rates.

For example, the statewide all-student group had a baseline four-year graduation rate of 85.2 percent for Cohort 2022. The ESSA long-term goal for Cohort 2028 would be 87.7 percent, representing a 25 percent reduction in the gap between the Cohort 2022 rate and the future goal of 95 percent. The annual targets for years one through five would be based on a yearly increase of 0.4 percent.

Each year, the annual targets for the remaining years will be reviewed. If a school has not met its annual target for a given year, the remaining annual targets through year five will be adjusted to reflect the annual amount of progress required to reach the long-term goal in the remaining years. If annual targets are met, the subsequent annual targets will remain the same. This results in more realistic targets annually but keeps the same ambitious long-term goals.

Both the long-term goals and annual targets will be defined uniquely for each school and student group based on individual baseline graduation rates for Cohort 2022. Because the goals and targets are based on individual baseline data, schools and student groups with lower baseline graduation rates will require more improvement to meet the long-term goals than those schools and student groups with higher baseline graduation rates. As a result, these goals and targets consider the improvement necessary to make progress in closing statewide gaps in graduation rates.

Because the NJDOE modified the calculation of the federal adjusted cohort graduation rate in 2021 and because of changes to the state graduation assessment requirements, longitudinal data is not available based on the current adjusted calculation and the new graduation assessment requirements. The NJDOE will review graduation data over the next several years to ensure that the long-term goals and annual targets remain ambitious and achievable.

See Appendix A for charts showing the initial state-level annual targets for four-year, five-year, and six-year graduation rates. Each school's annual targets, both for all students and for each student group, will be posted annually on the [NJDOE's Accountability webpage](#). As described above, annual targets may be adjusted annually based on actual performance during the six-year period, but long-term goals will remain the same.

[end NJDOE response]

c. English Language Proficiency (ESEA section 1111(c)(4)(A)(ii))

1. Describe the long-term goals for English learners for increases in the percentage of such students making progress in achieving English language proficiency, as measured by the statewide English language proficiency assessment including:
 - i. baseline data;
 - ii. the State-determined timeline for such students to achieve English language proficiency; and

- iii. how the long-term goals are ambitious.
- 2. Provide the measurements of interim progress toward the long-term goal for increases in the percentage of English learners making progress in achieving English language proficiency in Appendix A.

[begin NJDOE response]

Baseline and Long-Term Goals

New Jersey has set the following ESSA long-term goals for progress toward English language proficiency for the 2028-2029 school year:

- 34.6 percent of all multilingual learners in the State will make expected annual progress toward English language proficiency.
- 49 percent of multilingual learners in each school serving grades up to and including grade 5 will make expected annual progress toward English language proficiency.
- 27.7 percent of multilingual learners in each school serving grades above grade 5 will make expected annual progress toward attaining English language proficiency.

The annual progress toward English language proficiency is measured for all multilingual learners in grades kindergarten through 12 using performance on the ACCESS for ELLs assessment. New Jersey's progress toward English language proficiency indicator is the percentage of multilingual learners making annual expected progress on the ACCESS for ELLs.

The NJDOE has set separate long-term goals for schools serving up to and including grade 5 and schools serving grades above grade 5 because research has shown that younger students tend to achieve English language proficiency at faster rates.

To determine an appropriate long-term goal, the NJDOE reviewed historical ACCESS for ELLs assessment data from 2016-2017 to the present. In 2016-2017, the NJDOE transitioned to the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment to measure English language proficiency. The 2017-2018 school year was the first year that two years of data were available with the new assessment, so it was the first year the progress toward English language proficiency measure was calculated. In the initial calculation for 2017-2018, the 2016-2017 performance data was used as a baseline for all students since it was the first year of the new assessment. For many of the multilingual learners testing in the 2016-2017 school year, their true baseline, i.e., first year taking the ACCESS for ELLs assessment, would have been a year prior to 2016-2017, so this served as an artificial baseline and may have impacted results for the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years.

In the 2019-2020 school year, the ACCESS for ELLs assessment was canceled in response to the pandemic. In the 2020-2021 school year, many students were still learning remotely, but the assessment was only offered in person, which resulted in lower participation rates. As a result of the cancellation and lack of remote testing options, the progress toward English language proficiency measure was not calculated for these two school years.

The 2021-2022 school year was the first year of full assessment participation following the pandemic. The following table shows performance on the progress toward English language proficiency measure for the first year it was measured in 2017-2018 and outcomes for 2021-2022 and 2022-2023.

Figure A.6: Progress Toward English language proficiency 2017-2023

Group/Demographic	Percentage of students making expected progress toward English language proficiency 2017-2018	Percentage of students making expected progress toward English language proficiency 2021-2022	Percentage of students making expected progress toward English language proficiency 2022-2023
Statewide Multilingual Learners	50.5%	26.6%	28.6%
Schools/LEAs serving up to grade 5	60.7%	41.4%	43.0%
Schools/LEAs serving above grade 5	46.8%	22.5%	21.7%

Because of the artificial baselines set initially in 2016-2017 and to address the changes in outcomes, the NJDOE will use 2022-2023 results as a new baseline to set new ESSA long-term goals for the 2028-2029 school year. This will result in long-term goals that are more achievable but still ambitious for schools and students.

The NJDOE used the same methodology that was initially used in 2017, which was based on a one percentage point increase each year for each stratified group, to set the new long-term goals. This results in a 6-percentage point increase for the 2028-2019 long-term goals. Each school within the two stratified groups, schools serving up to grade 5 and schools serving grades above grade 5, will have the same long-term goals.

Figure A.7: Expected Progress Toward English language proficiency

Group/ Demographic	Baseline Percentage of students making expected progress toward English language proficiency: 2022-2023	Long-Term Goal Percentage of students making expected progress toward English language proficiency: 2028-2029
Statewide Multilingual Learners	28.6%	34.6%
Schools/LEAs serving up to grade 5	43.0%	49.0%
Schools/LEAs serving above grade 5	21.7%	27.7%

Measurements of Interim Progress

The measurements of interim progress, or annual targets, for each group will represent a yearly 1-percentage point increase over the baseline, which is the amount of annual progress necessary to reach the long-term goal in six years. Each school within the two stratified groups will have the same annual targets.

See Appendix A for a chart showing the annual targets for progress toward English language proficiency for both the state-level and the two stratified groups of schools.

Continuous Improvement and Forthcoming Changes

The NJDOE, along with stakeholders, will continue to evaluate student performance, growth trajectories, demographic changes, and other factors, to determine whether any additional adjustments need to be made to this indicator. Growth trajectories post-pandemic may differ from those observed pre-pandemic (at least initially), as some research suggests (see [Examining English Learner Testing, Proficiency, and Growth: Before, During, and “After” the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)). Therefore New Jersey will continually evaluate growth trends to ensure targets are ambitious and achievable. According to the 2013 Biennial Title III study, New Jersey had the fourth highest number of recent immigrant students in the United States. In recent years, a large percentage of growth in the multilingual learner population in New Jersey has come from multilingual learners in the later grades. It is widely accepted that students who enter the United States in high school tend to take longer to complete English language acquisition than those who enter in earlier grades. If this trend continues or changes, NJDOE will consider adjusting targets to ensure they are ambitious and achievable for the specific population of students.

[end NJDOE response]

iv. Accountability System Indicators (ESEA Section 1111(c)(4)(B))

[begin NJDOE response]

Introduction to Indicators

The federal accountability system required under ESSA is composed of an array of indicators that, when combined, help states to meaningfully differentiate how schools are performing and to identify schools in need of support and improvement. Below is a chart summarizing the NJDOE’s proposed indicators, each of which will be described in detail later in this section. Additional examples and information about each indicator can be found in the NJDOE’s annual ESSA Accountability Profile Companion Guide and other guidance documents, which are posted on the [NJDOE’s Accountability webpage](#).

Figure A.8: Overview of ESSA Indicators and Key Changes from 2017 to 2024

Required Indicator	New Jersey's Measure(s)	Description	Weighting	Changes from 2017
Academic Achievement	ELA and mathematics proficiency rates on annual statewide assessments	Percentage of students who meet grade-level standards on the annual statewide assessment in ELA and mathematics (includes students in grades 3-8 and high school).	30%	No change. NJDOE will explore index-based measures of proficiency during the 2024-2025 school year for future inclusion in the accountability system. The NJDOE aims to evaluate the metric and then

Required Indicator	New Jersey's Measure(s)	Description	Weighting	Changes from 2017
				publicly report the new metric for at least a year before adding it to the accountability system. An index-based measure may better differentiate schools with students furthest away from grade level and therefore in most need of support.
Academic Progress (applicable to elementary and middle schools)	ELA and mathematics median student growth percentiles (mSGP)	Median student growth percentiles (mSGP) for ELA and mathematics, which measure student growth from one year to the next as compared to their academic peers (includes students in grades 4–8 for ELA and grades 4–7 for mathematics).	40% (elementary and middle schools only)	No change
Graduation Rate (applicable to high schools)	4-year, 5-year, and 6-year graduation rates	Using the adjusted cohort methodology, the percentage of students who graduate within 4, 5, or 6 years of entering ninth grade.	40% (high schools only)	Added the 6-year adjusted cohort graduation rate as part of the overall graduation rate calculation starting with the 2023-2024 school year. Allows NJDOE to better reward schools for continuing to support matriculation for students who need additional time for completion. The 4-year rate would continue to account for 50% of the indicator, and the 5- and 6-year rates would account for 25% each.
Progress Toward Achieving English Language Proficiency	Progress toward English language proficiency	Percentage of multilingual learners making expected progress from one year to the next on the ACCESS for ELLs	20%	No change

Required Indicator	New Jersey's Measure(s)	Description	Weighting	Changes from 2017
		summative assessment (K–12).		
School Quality or Student Success	Chronic absenteeism	Percentage of students in grades K–12 who are chronically absent, meaning that they were not present for 10% or more of the days in membership.	10%	No change
School Quality or Student Success (applicable to high schools)	High School Persistence	Percentage of students in the 6-year adjusted cohort who either graduate with a State-endorsed diploma within 6 years of entering high school or remain actively enrolled through the end of year 6.	0% (high schools only)	Adding a new high school persistence measure starting in 2024-2025. The indicator will initially have 0% weight in the system. NJDOE will spend the next several years reviewing data and working with stakeholders to determine the future weight for this indicator.

[end NJDOE response]

a. Academic Achievement Indicator

Describe the Academic Achievement indicator, including a description of how the indicator

- i. is based on the long-term goals;
- ii. is measured by proficiency on the annual Statewide reading/language arts and mathematics assessments;
- iii. annually measures academic achievement for all students and separately for each subgroup of students; and
- iv. at the State's discretion, for each public high school in the State, includes a measure of student growth, as measured by the annual Statewide reading/language arts and mathematics assessments.

[begin NJDOE response]

Academic Achievement Indicators and 2024 Updates

New Jersey's academic achievement indicators are proficiency rates on statewide assessments in ELA and mathematics. The NJDOE is not proposing changes to the calculation of this metric at this time.

However, in this section, the NJDOE is signaling its exploration of a new measure of academic achievement. If the NJDOE, in consultation with stakeholders, decides to make changes to the metric calculation, a future amendment to the ESSA State Plan would be required before it could be implemented within the accountability system.

Description

Pursuant to Section 1111(c)(4)(B)(i)(I) of ESSA, the academic achievement indicator must measure proficiency on statewide ELA and mathematics assessments.

Students are required to take the NJSLA or DLM in both ELA and mathematics in each grade 3 through 8. In high school, all students are required to take the NJSLA ELA grade 9 assessment (or DLM ELA in grade 11) and all students must take the NJSLA Algebra I assessment in high school, except for students with qualified exceptions. Qualified exceptions include students who take the Algebra I assessment in middle school and students who take the DLM assessment in high school. See more information in "Seventh and Eighth Grade Mathematics Exception."

The NJDOE calculates separate ELA and mathematics proficiency rates for each school and student group. These proficiency rates are based on the performance of all students in grades 3 through 8 and high school. They include students taking the New Jersey Student Learning Assessment (NJSLA) and Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) assessments. Proficiency rates are calculated by the percentage of students meeting grade-level standards on the statewide assessments. Students are considered to have met grade-level standards if they receive a performance level of 4 or 5 on the NJSLA assessment or a performance level of 3 or 4 on the DLM assessment. All of New Jersey's statewide mathematics and ELA assessments underwent a USED-led peer review in 2016. As a result, New Jersey's current academic assessments were found to substantially meet all legal and technical requirements.

The academic achievement indicators for ELA and mathematics use the same measures as for the academic achievement long-term goals and measures of interim progress.

Continuous Improvement and Forthcoming Changes

While the above description reflects existing practice, the NJDOE plans to explore an index-based measure of proficiency during the 2024-2025 school year and then would publicly report the metric for at least a year before adding it to the accountability system. An index-based system helps to better differentiate schools with students furthest away from grade level and therefore in most need of support.

[end NJDOE response]

b. Indicator for Public Elementary and Secondary Schools that are Not High Schools (Other Academic Indicator)

Describe the Other Academic indicator, including how it annually measures the performance for all students and separately for each subgroup of students. If the Other Academic indicator is not a measure of student growth, the description must include a demonstration that the indicator is a valid and reliable statewide academic indicator that allows for meaningful differentiation in school performance.

[begin NJDOE response]

Academic Progress Indicator and 2024 Updates

New Jersey's academic progress indicator is the median student growth percentiles (mSGP) in ELA and mathematics and the NJDOE is not proposing changes to the calculation of this metric at this time.

Description

Median Student growth percentiles (mSGPs) measure a student’s academic progress from one year to the next compared to other students with similar prior test scores (academic peers). The NJDOE uses mSGPs for each school and student group based on statewide ELA and mathematics assessments to measure academic progress. When calculating mSGPs for ELA, it is based on students in grades 4 through 8. When calculating mSGPs for mathematics, it is based on students in grades 4 through 7. Data from grade 8 is not used for mathematics because a significant portion of eighth graders take Algebra I rather than the eighth-grade mathematics assessment.

The performance of all students in applicable tested grades will be included in the mSGP school and student group calculations. . Each school and student group receives an overall mSGP for ELA and an overall mSGP for mathematics.

[end NJDOE response]

c. Graduation Rate

Describe the Graduation Rate indicator, including a description of:

- i. how the indicator is based on the long-term goals;
- ii. how the indicator annually measures graduation rate for all students and separately for each subgroup of students;
- iii. how the indicator is based on the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate;
- iv. if the State, at its discretion, also includes one or more extended-year adjusted cohort graduation rates, how the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate is combined with that rate or rates within the indicator; and
- v. if applicable, how the State includes in its four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate and any extended-year adjusted cohort graduation rates students with the most significant cognitive disabilities assessed using an alternate assessment aligned to alternate academic achievement standards under ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(D) and awarded a State-defined alternate diploma under ESEA section 8101(23) and (25).

[begin NJDOE response]

Graduation Rate Indicator and 2024 Updates

New Jersey uses four-year, five-year, and six-year adjusted cohort graduation rates as its graduation rate indicators. The 2017 ESSA State Plan only included four-year and five-year rates. NJDOE is adding the six-year rate as an indicator starting in 2024.

Description

Pursuant to 1111(c)(4)(B)(iii)(I)(bb) of ESSA, graduation rates must reflect the percentage of students who graduate within four years of entering ninth grade (“the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate”), and New Jersey has the discretion to consider an extended-year adjusted cohort graduation rate. In 2017, at the strong request of stakeholders, the NJDOE included the five-year adjusted cohort graduation rate as an indicator, in addition to the four-year graduation rate. As noted in the 2017 plan, stakeholders also indicated that they would be interested in calculating the percentage of students who graduated within six years of entering grade 9 and that the NJDOE was committed to exploring the feasibility and benefits of including the six-year graduation rate in the future. After conferring with stakeholders in 2024 and studying the impact of including the six-year graduation rate, the NJDOE concluded that the six-year graduation rate should be included as it allows for additional differentiation between schools. Including both the five-year and six-year graduation rates will allow New Jersey to maintain high standards for all students while recognizing that some students need additional time to master academic standards.

Graduation rates will be calculated based on the graduation rates of all students and will factor in student group graduation rates using the adjusted cohort methodology described in Sections 8101(25) and 8101(23) of ESSA.

Additional note: The federal adjusted cohort graduation rate only includes students who have met all state graduation requirements. Under ESSA, students with disabilities who did not meet all state graduation requirements (course, attendance, and/or assessment requirements based on year of graduation) due to modifications or exemptions in their IEPs are not included as graduates (in the numerator) in the federal version of the graduation rate. Therefore, the federal version must be used for ESSA accountability and federal reporting and represents a change from the calculation used before 2021. Due to the 2019 USED New Jersey Performance Review and the resulting Corrective Action Plan, this adjustment was made starting with the 2020-2021 graduation rate calculation.

[end NJDOE response]

d. Progress in Achieving English Language Proficiency (ELP) Indicator

Describe the Progress in Achieving ELP indicator, including the State’s definition of ELP, as measured by the State ELP assessment.

[begin NJDOE response]

Progress Toward Achieving English Language Proficiency Indicator

New Jersey’s progress toward English language proficiency (ELP) indicator is the percentage of multilingual learners making annual expected progress on the ACCESS for ELLs English language proficiency (ELP) assessment. The NJDOE is not proposing changes to the calculation of this metric at this time, although the NJDOE is committed to partnering with researchers and stakeholders to continuously explore ways to improve the effectiveness of this indicator. If the NJDOE, in consultation with stakeholders, decides to make changes to this indicator, a future amendment to the ESSA State Plan would be required before it could be implemented within the accountability system.

Description

Pursuant to 1111(c)(4)(B)(iv) of ESSA, NJDOE’s progress toward English language proficiency (ELP) indicator will use the ACCESS for ELLs assessment to evaluate progress toward English language proficiency (ELP) from one year to the next, based on the starting level of individual students in grades kindergarten through 12. This measure of progress recognizes students entering language instruction programs and receiving related services start at different levels of English proficiency. The NJDOE defines the proficiency cut score as a composite score of 4.5 on the ACCESS for ELLs.

For each multilingual learner with a baseline English language proficiency (ELP) level between 1 and 4.4, annual expected growth targets will be defined based on their initial proficiency level. The number of years for students to achieve proficiency varies based on the student’s initial proficiency level. The following table outlines the expected number of years to reach English language proficiency (ELP) and how annual expected growth targets will be calculated for each multilingual learner based on their initial proficiency level, shown as IY in the table below.

Figure A.9: Student-Level Expected Growth Targets

Note for people using screen readers: The equations may not be fully accessible in the document. Therefore, each equation is followed by a word version of the equation in white text.

Student Baseline English Language Proficiency (ELP) Level (IY) Range	Number of Expected Years to Reach English Language Proficiency (ELP)	Year 1 Student Expected Growth Target	Year 2 Student Expected Growth Target	Year 3 Student Expected Growth Target	Year 4 Student Expected Growth Target
1–1.9	4	$IY + (4.5 - IY)/4$ IY plus the difference between 4.5 and IY divided by 4	$IY + [(4.5 - IY)/4] \times 2$ IY plus the difference between 4.5 and IY divided by 4, multiplied by 2	$IY + [(4.5 - IY)/4] \times 3$ IY plus the difference between 4.5 and IY divided by 4, multiplied by 3	4.5
2–2.9	3	$IY + (4.5 - IY)/3$ IY plus the difference between 4.5 and IY divided by 3	$IY + [(4.5 - IY)/3] \times 2$ IY plus the difference between 4.5 and IY divided by 3, multiplied by 2	4.5	n/a
3–3.9	2	$IY + (4.5 - IY)/2$ IY plus the difference between 4.5 and IY divided by 2	4.5	n/a	n/a
4–4.4	1	4.5	n/a	n/a	n/a

If a student’s ACCESS for ELLs performance level meets or exceeds the expected growth target for years 1 through 4, the student will be considered as having made expected progress for the given year. If a student does not reach English proficiency within the expected number of years based on their initial proficiency level, the student’s future expected growth targets will be 4.5 for all subsequent years that the student continues to take the ACCESS for ELLs assessment. Students with an initial proficiency level of

4.5 in their first year taking the ACCESS for ELLs assessment will be considered as having made expected progress for the given year.

At the school level, the progress toward English language proficiency (ELP) measure is the percentage of multilingual learners who either scored proficient (performance level of 4.5) in their first year taking the ACCESS for ELLs assessment or demonstrated the annual expected amount of growth based on the targets outlined in the table above. The measure includes all multilingual learners who took the ACCESS for ELLs assessment in the current school year and at least once in a previous year and multilingual learners who took the assessment for the first time in the current year and scored proficient.

This indicator can be used to compare performance across schools because ACCESS for ELLs is a statewide assessment, and all students are measured by the same standards. ACCESS for ELLs has been deemed a valid assessment for the measurement of ELP based on the WIDA English Language Development Standards. It meets federal requirements for the monitoring and reporting of multilingual learner progress toward attainment of English language proficiency (ELP).

The NJDOE plans to explore the use of alternate growth models for progress toward English language proficiency (ELP) over the next few years through several initiatives: collaboration with the Regional Education Laboratory (REL) on a long-term research study that explores ways to measure a school's contribution to English language proficiency (ELP), collaboration with New Jersey's Bilingual Advisory Committee, and a continual focus on collaborative data analysis. The NJDOE will continue to review longitudinal performance data as it becomes available to ensure this indicator is providing insightful and actionable data to stakeholders across the State.

[end NJDOE response]

e. School Quality or Student Success Indicator(s)

Describe each School Quality or Student Success Indicator, including, for each such indicator:

- i. how it allows for meaningful differentiation in school performance;
- ii. that it is valid, reliable, comparable, and statewide (for the grade span(s) to which it applies); and
- iii. of how each such indicator annually measures performance for all students and separately for each subgroup of students.

For any School Quality or Student Success indicator that does not apply to all grade spans, the description must include the grade spans to which it does apply.

[begin NJDOE response]

School Quality or Student Success Indicator and 2024 Updates

New Jersey’s school quality or student success indicator is chronic absenteeism. The only change NJDOE is proposing to the calculation of this metric at this time is changing the number of days that a student must be “in membership” to be included in the denominator of the metric from 45 days to 90 days to comply with the federal definition of partial attendance. Additionally, the NJDOE will explore an additional new school quality or student success metric called “high school persistence,” described below. If the NJDOE, in consultation with stakeholders, decides to add a new school quality or student success metric, a future amendment to the ESSA State Plan would be required before it could be implemented within the accountability system.

While the NJDOE is not proposing substantive changes at this time, the description of this indicator has been shortened. For a complete explanation of the original rationale and a record of the robust stakeholder engagement process, please see the [2017 ESSA State Plan](#).

Background

Since the reauthorization of ESSA, New Jersey stakeholders have been invested in identifying meaningful metrics for this indicator. Given the many indicator requirements, the universe of valid, reliable, comparable, and statewide metrics that can be used to measure schools and student groups alike remains limited. However, NJDOE staff and stakeholders have consistently agreed that shining a light on school climate was and remains a New Jersey priority. In 2017, following robust stakeholder engagement, the NJDOE chose “chronic absenteeism” as its indicator of school quality and student success. Tracking and improving student attendance remains a New Jersey priority as the pandemic exacerbated gaps among student groups who are missing over 10 percent of their school days.

Description

New Jersey will continue to use chronic absenteeism as an indicator of school quality. Chronic absenteeism has been used as an indicator since New Jersey’s initial ESSA plan was approved in 2017. Chronic absenteeism measures the percentage of students in grades kindergarten through 12 who were not present for 10 percent or more of days in membership, i.e., the number of school days in session for which the student was enrolled.

The number of days present is the number of days that the student attended school when school was in session. A student not present, whether excused, unexcused, or for disciplinary action, is absent unless permitted by statutory or regulatory exemption. The detailed rules about what constitutes a “day of attendance” and enrollment in a school are found in N.J.A.C. 6A:32-8. For example, for a school with a 180-day school year, a student would be “in membership” for 180 days unless the student missed school for a State-excused reason, such as “Take a Child to Work Day”. State-excused statutory or regulatory absences are not counted as either absences or as days in membership. If a student was in membership for 180 days, the student would be identified as chronically absent if they were not present for 18 or more days.

Chronic absenteeism rates for the purpose of school quality or student success under ESSA will be calculated based on the percentage of all students who were “in membership” for 90 or more days. A student participating in an educational program, not in the regularly assigned location, under the guidance

and direction of a teacher while school is in session (e.g., field trip, structured learning experience, community-based instruction) or on home instruction, pursuant to current N.J.A.C. 6A:16-10, is considered present and in membership. To continually improve the quality of this data collection, the NJDOE is in the process of developing updated and detailed student absenteeism data guidance for LEAs. NJDOE staff also provide technical assistance on an as-needed basis to LEAs.

Rationale

Among all the indicators required by ESSA, NJDOE received the most stakeholder input in 2017 regarding the school quality or student success indicator. NJDOE is truly grateful for the feedback, which provided a strong understanding of what different stakeholders in New Jersey care about the most. In 2024, the NJDOE presented members of the 2024 ESSA Stakeholder Group with the rationale for maintaining chronic absenteeism as the school quality or success indicator. In sum, measuring chronic absenteeism remains a priority. Research shows that a positive school climate and culture can help prevent chronic absenteeism and foster regular student attendance. Students who feel safe, supported, and engaged are more likely to attend school consistently. Regular attendance is crucial to bolstering student achievement. Conversely, chronic absenteeism is often correlated with negative perceptions of school climate,¹ lower likelihood of reading at grade level by grade 3,² and higher rates of dropping out of school.³ Schools can promote attendance by using data to understand the root cause of high rates of absenteeism, investing in comprehensive support systems that address those root causes, and by creating positive, safe, and welcoming school environments.

New School Quality or Student Success Indicator: High School Persistence

School quality or student success is also reflected in the percentage of a school's students who continue to remain enrolled and engaged in school, even when graduation criteria have not yet been met. New Jersey will add high school persistence as a new indicator of school quality or student success starting with the 2024-2025 school year. The indicator will contribute zero weight toward calculating the summative score in the initial year.

The high school persistence indicator will be calculated as the percentage of students in the six-year adjusted cohort who either:

1. Graduate with a State-endorsed diploma within six years of entering high school, including graduating students with disabilities who did not meet all State graduation requirements due to a modification or exemption in their IEP; or
2. Remain actively enrolled through the end of year six.

This measure will only apply to high schools, and it will be based on the same group of students, the six-year adjusted cohort, that is used for the six-year adjusted cohort graduation rate. When looking at high school persistence rates for Cohort 2021 as of the 2022-2023 school year, the school-level rates range from 40 percent to 100 percent. Additionally, when comparing schools and student groups all with a six-

¹ Schanzenbach, D. W., Mumford, M., & Bauer, L. (2016, October). [Lessons for Broadening School Accountability under the Every Student Succeeds Act](#) (Rep.). Retrieved January 19, 2017.

² Ehrlich, S., Gwynne, J. A., Pareja, A. S., and Allensworth, E. M. [Preschool attendance in Chicago public schools: relationships with learning outcomes and reasons for absences: Research summary](#). The University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Reform, 2013.

³ Utah Education Policy Center at the University of Utah. Chronic absence in Utah public schools, 2012.

year federal adjusted cohort graduation rate of approximately 70 percent, the corresponding high school persistence rates range from 70 percent to 100 percent. Based on this variation in outcomes, this measure allows for meaningful differentiation between schools and student groups.

Rationale

Studies have shown that students who remain in school tend to have more favorable outcomes later in life; higher rates of employment, better-paying jobs, and a reduced risk of incarceration are just some of the differences that have been observed.⁴ Including an accountability measure that credits schools for their work in keeping students engaged and enrolled will ultimately help focus attention on students who need the most support, as these students often have the highest probability of dropping out. Students with a higher risk of dropping out tend to face more adversity than their peers and have multiple risk factors such as higher rates of chronic absenteeism, lower academic performance, higher rates of mobility, and siblings who have also dropped out. By including a measure of high school persistence, the NJDOE is making it clear that improvements in student persistence are precipitated by improvements in both academic and non-academic areas, and that a focus on persistence will encourage behaviors aimed at proactively supporting students within these areas.

Considerations for Future Indicators of School Quality and Student Success

ESSA not only allows for, but encourages, states to continuously improve their state plans, including accountability and support systems. While NJDOE plans to utilize both chronic absenteeism and high school persistence as indicators of school quality and student success, the NJDOE remains deeply committed to collaborating with stakeholders to explore/develop additional indicators that best reflect New Jersey's priorities and ultimately have the most impact on improving student outcomes.

[end NJDOE response]

v. Annual Meaningful Differentiation (ESEA section 1111(c)(4)(C))

[begin NJDOE response]

Introduction

The NJDOE recognizes the purpose of the ESSA accountability system is to identify schools that need the most support when compared to all other schools. Therefore, the annual meaningful differentiation system proposed below is not a grading system but a system to identify schools needing improvement. The next two sections (sections v. and vi.) provide additional details about how the NJDOE differentiates schools based on the high-level data described in section iv.

A well-functioning accountability system identifies schools, provides interventions based on the unique needs of each school identified, and enables each school to improve. Since implementing the system in 2017, the NJDOE has seen a successful identification, support, and improvement process. Despite

⁴ Lansford, J. E., Dodge, K. A., Pettit, G. S., & Bates, J. E. (2016). [A Public Health Perspective on School Dropout and Adult Outcomes: A Prospective Study of Risk and Protective Factors from Age 5 to 27](#). *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 58(6), 652–658. doi: 10.1016/j.jadohealth.2016.01.014.

pandemic-related disruptions and timeline adjustments described later in section vi, the system has operated on this cycle of identification and support as described in greater detail in section viii.

Schools were identified for support, provided with the tools and resources they needed to improve, and made significant progress, as evidenced by the data below:

- Of the 100 schools statewide with the highest increases in summative ratings on the accountability system between 2017-2018 and 2021-2022 (i.e., the top 4 percent of all schools statewide), 26 received comprehensive or targeted support from the NJDOE.
- 84 percent of comprehensive schools with summative ratings in both 2017-2018 and 2021-2022 saw increases in their summative ratings within those four years.
- 65 percent of all eligible schools in status for the 2022-2023 school year had made enough progress to exit comprehensive or targeted status as of June 30, 2023.

2024 Updates

Given the strong results of the existing accountability system, the NJDOE proposed only minor adjustments to the current ESSA accountability system and the ensuing descriptions of how the NJDOE provides comprehensive support to New Jersey schools. These changes are part of a continuous improvement process, as the NJDOE maintains that small changes can help garner even greater results than those demonstrated thus far.

One key change in this section is that the NJDOE is adding one performance level descriptor (“Progress, Target Not Met”) to its system of annual meaningful differentiation. This will provide schools and the public with more nuanced information because, over the last several years, the NJDOE has observed many schools demonstrating positive growth, even when all targets are not met. Additional changes to this section are attributed to formatting changes and a more detailed explanation of the State’s differentiation and reporting process than was provided in the 2017 ESSA State Plan.

[end NJDOE response]

a and b: Differentiation and Weighting

- a. Describe the State’s system of annual meaningful differentiation of all public schools in the State, consistent with the requirements of section 1111(c)(4)(C) of the ESEA, including a description of:
 - i. how the system is based on all indicators in the State’s accountability system,
 - ii. for all students and for each subgroup of students. Note that each state must comply with the requirements in 1111(c)(5) of the ESEA with respect to accountability for charter schools.
- b. Describe the weighting of each indicator in the State’s system of annual meaningful differentiation, including how the Academic Achievement, Other Academic, Graduation Rate, and Progress in ELP indicators each receive substantial weight individually and, in the aggregate, much greater weight than the School Quality or Student Success indicator(s), in the aggregate.

[begin NJDOE response]

System of Annual Meaningful Differentiation

New Jersey’s system of annual meaningful differentiation is measured in two ways:

1. **Summative score:** Each school's summative score and corresponding summative rating are calculated based on the performance of all indicators. Summative score calculations are based on overall school and student group performance.
2. **Indicator performance level:** Each school and student group is assigned a performance level for each indicator annually.

To meet the requirements of ESSA, every three years, the NJDOE uses the summative score and the indicator performance level to identify schools in need of additional support. For example, schools with a summative score in the bottom five percent of Title I schools will be identified for comprehensive support and improvement (CSI). Schools with one or more student groups with a summative score that would be in the bottom five percent of Title I schools will be identified as a school needing additional targeted support and improvement (ATSI). Annually, the NJDOE will identify schools with one or more student groups that missed annual targets or standards for all indicators for two consecutive years as schools that are in need of targeted support and improvement (TSI).

Indicator Performance Level

For each indicator, the NJDOE defines performance levels based on indicator performance compared to annual targets. Each school and student group are categorized into a performance level for each indicator annually. This provides schools and LEAs with useful information for annual planning and measures how schools and student groups are making progress toward their goals.

As mentioned above, a key change in this section is that the NJDOE is adding one performance level descriptor (“Progress, Target Not Met”) to its system of annual meaningful differentiation. This will provide schools and the public with more nuanced information because, over the last several years, the NJDOE has observed many schools demonstrating positive growth, even when all targets are not met. Figures A.10-A.14 below show the NJDOE’s performance levels and newly include “Progress, Target Not Met.”

Figure A.10: Performance level categories for academic achievement

Academic Achievement Performance Level	Performance Level Description
No Improvement	Annual performance is not higher than the prior year.
Progress, Target Not Met	Annual performance is higher than the prior year, but the target was not met.
Met Target within Confidence Interval	Annual performance meets the target within a 90% confidence interval.
Met Target	Annual performance is at or above the annual target.
Exceeds Expectations	Annual performance is at or above 80%.

Figure A.11: Performance level categories for graduation rate

Graduation Performance Level	Performance Level Description
No Improvement	Graduation rate is not higher than the prior year.
Progress, Target Not Met	Graduation rate is higher than the prior year, but the target was not met.
Met Target	Graduation rate is at or above the annual target.
Met Goal	Graduation rate is at or above the future goal.

Figure A.12: Performance level categories for progress toward English language proficiency

Progress toward English Language Proficiency Performance Level	Performance Level Description
No Improvement	Annual performance is not higher than the prior year.
Progress, Target not Met	Annual performance is higher than the prior year, but the target was not met.
Met Target within Confidence Interval	Annual performance meets the target within a 90% confidence interval.
Met Target	Annual performance is at or above the annual target.
Met Goal	Annual performance is at or above the long-term goal.

Figure A.13: Performance level categories for academic progress or student growth

Academic Progress Performance Level	Performance Level Description
Below Standard	mSGP is below 40.
Met Standard	mSGP is between 40 and 60.
Exceeds Standard	mSGP is 60 or higher.

Figure A.14: Performance level categories for chronic absenteeism

Chronic Absenteeism Performance Level	Performance Level Description
Target not Met	Chronic absenteeism rate is below the statewide chronic absenteeism rate for the grades served by the school.
Met Target	Chronic absenteeism rate is at or above the statewide chronic absenteeism rate for the grades served by the school.

Summative Scores

The NJDOE will calculate summative scores based on performance across all indicators. For each indicator, an indicator score is calculated based on both overall school performance and student group performance. Weights are assigned to each indicator. Summative ratings are the percentile ranks of the summative scores.

For the purposes of calculating indicator scores and summative ratings, schools are compared to all other schools in the State within the same school configuration. Schools are assigned to one of three categories based on grade span and available data: elementary/middle, high school, and mixed configuration. Schools in the elementary/middle configuration have academic progress data available but not graduation rate data (e.g., schools serving grades kindergarten through 9). Schools in the high school configuration have graduation data available but not academic progress data (e.g., schools serving only grades 9 through 12). Schools in the mixed configuration have both academic progress and graduation data available (e.g., schools serving grades 6 through 12).

Indicator Weights

The NJDOE will weigh each measure according to the weights below when calculating summative scores. Many schools do not meet the minimum *n*-size of 20 students for the progress toward English language proficiency indicator, and in those cases that indicator will not be included in the calculation of the summative score. Weights in the following tables are provided for schools both with and without the progress toward English language proficiency indicator. The high school persistence indicator will be added with zero weight for high school and mixed configuration schools starting with the 2024-2025 school year. The NJDOE will engage with stakeholders and review data to determine the weight that will be used for the high school persistence indicator for future years and provide the adjusted weights in a future amendment to the state plan.

In all cases, the weight of the academic indicators (academic progress, academic achievement, and progress toward English language proficiency) is significantly higher weight than the weight of the school quality measure. Additionally, the combined weight of the academic progress indicators is higher than the combined weight of the academic achievement indicators, which is a result of stakeholder feedback when the initial plan was developed in 2017.

Figure A.15: Elementary and Middle School Weights

Indicator Category	Indicator	Weight with Progress toward English Language Proficiency	Weight without Progress toward English Language Proficiency
Academic Progress	ELA Growth	20%	25%
Academic Progress	Math Growth	20%	25%
Academic Achievement	ELA Proficiency	15%	17.5%
Academic Achievement	Math Proficiency	15%	17.5%
Progress toward English Language Proficiency	Progress toward English Language Proficiency	20%	n/a
School Quality or Student Success	Chronic Absenteeism	10%	15%

Figure A.16: High School Weights

Indicator Category	Indicator	Weight with Progress toward English Language Proficiency	Weight without Progress toward English Language Proficiency
Academic Achievement	ELA Proficiency	15%	17.5%
Academic Achievement	Math Proficiency	15%	17.5%
Graduation Rate	4-Year Graduation Rate	20%	25%
Graduation Rate	5-Year Graduation Rate	10%	12.5%
Graduation Rate	6-Year Graduation Rate	10%	12.5%
Progress toward English Language Proficiency	Progress toward English Language Proficiency	20%	n/a
School Quality or Student Success	Chronic Absenteeism	10%	15%
School Quality or Student Success	High School Persistence	0% (Starting 2024-2025)	0% (Starting 2024-2025)

Figure A.17: Mixed Configuration School Weights

Indicator Category	Indicator	Weight with Progress toward English Language Proficiency	Weight without Progress toward English Language Proficiency
Academic Progress	ELA Growth	12.5%	15%
Academic Progress	Math Growth	12.5%	15%
Academic Achievement	ELA Proficiency	10%	12.5%
Academic Achievement	Math Proficiency	10%	12.5%
Graduation Rate	4-Year Graduation Rate	12.5%	15%
Graduation Rate	5-Year Graduation Rate	6.25%	7.5%

Indicator Category	Indicator	Weight with Progress toward English Language Proficiency	Weight without Progress toward English Language Proficiency
Graduation Rate	6-Year Graduation Rate	6.25%	7.5%
Progress toward English Language Proficiency	Progress toward English Language Proficiency	20%	n/a
School Quality or Student Success	Chronic Absenteeism	10%	15%
School Quality or Student Success	High School Persistence	0% (Starting 2024-2025)	0% (Starting 2024-2025)

Indicator and Summative Score Methodology

The NJDOE will calculate indicator scores, summative scores, and summative ratings using the following steps.

1. Convert raw indicator values to standard scores

Each school and each student group's raw performance on each indicator (e.g., ELA proficiency rate or four-year graduation rate) will be converted to a standardized z-score, which represents how each school and each student group performed on the indicator relative to other schools, and other student groups, across the state. Calculations are done separately for each school configuration, so schools are compared to other schools with the same school configuration.

2. Determine indicator scores

For each indicator, the z-scores for all student groups are averaged. The student group z-score average is then averaged with the school's z-score to provide an overall standard score for the indicator. Half of this standardized score is based on the schoolwide performance, and the other half is averaged equally across all student groups. This overall standard score is then converted to a percentile rank that reflects each school's performance relative to all schools within the same school configuration. This percentile rank is called the indicator score.

3. Calculate summative score by applying weight (above) to indicator scores

Indicator scores will be multiplied by the corresponding weights to determine the points earned by each school toward the summative score. The points earned for each indicator will be summed to calculate the summative score.

4. Calculate summative rating

The summative score will be converted into a summative rating, which represents a percentile rank of the summative score compared to schools with the same school configuration.

The following table provides an example of how indicator scores would be calculated for chronic absenteeism for an elementary school. The data in this table is for illustrative purposes only and sample z-scores do not accurately represent the percentile at which the stated raw performance levels would fall.

Figure A.18: Example: Calculating an Indicator Score (Chronic Absenteeism)

Student Group	Non-Chronic Absence Rate	Standardized Z-Score
All Students	98.2%	2.8
Economically Disadvantaged Students	93.5 %	2.5
Students with Disabilities	97.8 %	3.1
Multilingual Learners	98.7 %	3.2
American Indian or Alaska Native	n/a (did not meet <i>n</i> -size)	n/a (did not meet <i>n</i> -size)
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	97.4 %	1.8
Black or African American	99.5 %	3.0
Hispanic/Latino	96.9 %	2.9
White	97.4%	2.0
Two or More Races	94.1%	1.9

This table shows the non-chronic absenteeism rates for each student group and the corresponding z-scores. First, the student group's average z-score would be calculated by averaging all the standardized z-scores for student groups that meet *n*-size other than the “all students” group. This results in a student group average z-score of 2.55. The student group average z-score of 2.55 would then be averaged with the z-score for all students of 2.8 to get an overall standardized score of 2.68.

The indicator score would then be ranked with the chronic absenteeism indicator scores for all other elementary and middle schools and the percentile rank would be calculated. For example, if the school’s overall standardized score of 2.68 was equal to or higher than 85 percent of other elementary and middle schools, the school’s indicator score for chronic absenteeism would be 85.

The following table shows sample indicator scores and weights for a high school.

Figure A.19: Example: Calculating a Summative Score and Rating for a High School

Indicator Category	Indicator	Indicator Score	Weight	Points Earned Towards Summative Score (Indicator Score × Weighting)
Academic Achievement	ELA Proficiency	62.23	15%	9.33
Academic Achievement	Math Proficiency	66.67	15%	10.00

Indicator Category	Indicator	Indicator Score	Weight	Points Earned Towards Summative Score (Indicator Score × Weighting)
Graduation Rate	4-Year Graduation Rate	77.29	20%	15.46
Graduation Rate	5-Year Graduation Rate	70.9	20%	14.18
Progress toward English language proficiency	Progress toward English language proficiency	92.31	20%	18.46
School Quality or Student Success	Chronic Absenteeism	28.61	10%	2.86

To calculate the summative score, based on the data above, you would add together the sum of the last column, the points earned towards the summative score, for all indicators. This would result in a summative score of 70.3.

The summative rating would be calculated by determining the percentile rank of the summative score compared to all other high schools in the state. For example, this school may receive a summative rating of 75, which means that its summative score of 70.3 is as good or better than 75 percent of other high schools' summative scores in the state.

Rationale: Why Percentile Rankings?

The NJDOE chose to use percentile rankings for its indicator score calculations and summative ratings for several reasons. First, percentile rankings provide schools, families, and the public a clear and easy-to-understand measure of how schools are performing on the indicators in the school accountability and support system relative to other schools in the state in the same category (i.e., elementary and middle school, high schools, and mixed configuration schools). The rankings are relative; a school's ranking is entirely dependent upon how it performs on the indicators included compared to other schools in the state.

Annually, the NJDOE will use the school and student group performance levels to identify consistently underperforming schools for targeted support and improvement. Every three years, the summative scores will be used to identify schools in need of comprehensive or additional targeted support and improvement based on all indicators, in accordance with the weighting and identification systems described above.

[end NJDOE response]

c. Methodologies

If the States uses a different methodology or methodologies for annual meaningful differentiation than the one described in 4.v.a. above for schools for which an accountability determination cannot be made (e.g., P–2 schools), describe the different methodology or methodologies, indicating the type(s) of schools to which it applies.

[begin NJDOE response]

While all schools will receive performance levels for indicators that meet the minimum n -size, in cases where a school has data for too few indicators, a summative score cannot be calculated. Instead, an alternate methodology will be used to identify schools for support and improvement. The type of alternate methodology used is determined by a school's grade configuration and the data available.

Modified Summative Score

Schools with academic achievement data available but no academic progress or graduation data available (e.g., K–3 or 9–10 schools) will be evaluated based on a modified summative score using available data (academic achievement, progress toward English language proficiency, and chronic absenteeism).

Elementary School Linking

Elementary schools without an assessed grade level (e.g., schools serving only grades kindergarten through 2) are linked to their respective receiving schools that have assessed grade levels and treated as a single unit for school accountability purposes. For determination purposes, only data for the receiving school will be used. Charter schools without assessed grade levels will be evaluated based on [the Charter Performance Framework](#).

High School Alternate Methodologies

In LEAs where grades 9 through 12 are split across multiple high schools (e.g. a grade 9 through 10 school and a grade 11 through 12 school), the schools will be linked and treated as a single unit for school accountability purposes.

High schools that have graduation rate data but do not meet the minimum n -size for assessment data (e.g., schools serving grades 11 to 12 only) will be identified for comprehensive support and improvement if the four-year graduation rate is at or below 67 percent or the 5-year graduation rate is at or below 68 percent.

Small Schools

In the rare case that a school is too small to determine school accountability ratings, it will be evaluated through a comprehensive review using available data and other applicable accountability frameworks, such as Perkins for vocational schools or the Charter Performance Framework for charter schools.

School and Student Inclusion in the Accountability System

Any schools identified as regular schools or vocational schools, based on federal and state school type definitions, will be included in the state's accountability system. For schools that fall under other federal or state school types, such as special education schools or shared-time vocational schools, students will be included in the accountability data of their sending schools. Similarly, special education students served in private schools will also be included in the sending schools' accountability results. This ensures that placement decisions are reviewed closely at the sending school and LEA levels. For shared-time vocational schools, the sending schools still provide, and are responsible for, the academic programs, services, and outcomes for the students.

[end NJDOE response]

vi. Identification of Schools (ESEA section 1111(c)(4)(D))

a–d: Comprehensive Support and Improvement Schools

- a. **Comprehensive Support and Improvement Schools.** Describe the State’s methodology for identifying not less than the lowest-performing five percent of all schools receiving Title I, Part A funds in the State for comprehensive support and improvement, including the year in which the State will first identify such schools.
 - b. **Comprehensive Support and Improvement Schools.** Describe the State’s methodology for identifying all public high schools in the State failing to graduate one-third or more of their students for comprehensive support and improvement, including the year in which the State will first identify such schools.
 - c. **Comprehensive Support and Improvement Schools.** Describe the methodology by which the State identifies public schools in the State receiving Title I, Part A funds that have received additional targeted support under ESEA section 1111(d)(2)(C) (based on identification as a school in which any subgroup of students, on its own, would lead to identification under ESEA section 1111(c)(4)(D)(i)(I) using the State’s methodology under ESEA section 1111(c)(4)(D)) and that have not satisfied the statewide exit criteria for such schools within a State-determined number of years, including the year in which the State will first identify such schools.
 - d. **Frequency of Identification.** Provide, for each type of school identified for comprehensive support and improvement, the frequency with which the State will, thereafter, identify such schools. Note that these schools must be identified at least once every three years.
-

[begin NJDOE response]

Methodology for Identification of Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) Schools

Once summative scores have been calculated (see Section A.4.v), the summative scores for Title I schools are arranged from highest to lowest for each school configuration: elementary/middle schools, high schools, and mixed configuration schools. For each configuration, a cut score identifies the bottom five percent of Title I schools. Any Title I schools that are among the bottom five percent of Title I schools for each configuration, i.e., below the cut score, are identified as comprehensive support and improvement (CSI) schools.

Separating schools by configuration before arranging the schools from highest to lowest meets the minimum requirements of section 1111(c)(4)(i)(I) of ESSA, as the methodology will result in at least the bottom five percent of Title I schools being identified for comprehensive support and improvement for overall low performance. Schools that cannot be evaluated via the methodology outlined above are instead evaluated through one of the alternate methodologies outlined in Section A.4.v. At least five percent of the Title I schools evaluated through an alternate methodology are then identified for comprehensive support and improvement. This process ensures that at least five percent of all Title I schools, regardless of identification methodology, are identified for comprehensive support and improvement for overall low performance.

The NJDOE next identifies any high schools with a four-year graduation rate at or below 67 percent for comprehensive support and improvement for its low graduation rate.

Finally, the NJDOE identifies any Title I schools that have been identified for additional targeted support and improvement for three or more years and have not met the exit criteria to exit status. These schools are identified for comprehensive support and improvement based on chronically low-performing student groups.

A breakdown of each identification category is included in the summary table below.

Figure A.20: Summary of Identification Categories

Status	Category of Identification	Description	Identification and Exit Timeline
Comprehensive Support and Improvement	Overall Low Performing	Title I schools with a summative score in the bottom 5% of Title I schools	Every 3 years
Comprehensive Support and Improvement	Low Graduation Rate	High schools with a 4-year graduation rate of 67% or less	Every 3 years
Comprehensive Support and Improvement	Chronically Low Performing Student Group(s)	Title I schools identified as additional targeted support and improvement for 3 or more consecutive years	Every 3 years

Status	Category of Identification	Description	Identification and Exit Timeline
Additional Targeted Support and Improvement	Low Performing Student Group(s)	Schools with one or more student groups with a summative score that would be in the bottom 5% of Title I schools	Every 3 years
Targeted Support and Improvement	Consistently Underperforming Student Group(s)	Schools with one or more student groups that missed annual targets and performed below the state average for all available indicators for 2 years in a row	Annually

Timeline

In January 2018, the NJDOE first used its identification methodology to generate a preliminary list of schools needing targeted or comprehensive support and improvement. January was the ideal timeframe for preliminary identification to ensure LEAs and schools know their status in advance of LEAs' development of their annual budgets and ESSA applications and to provide ample time to develop appropriate strategies and support with stakeholders.

Fall 2018 was the first time all proposed data elements were available. The updated version of the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 was given for the first time to all multilingual learners in the 2016-2017 school year. To calculate progress toward English language proficiency, the NJDOE needed to assess students for a minimum of two years. Therefore, growth data was not available until the fall of 2018. As such, in November 2018, the NJDOE re-ran its accountability data using all indicators to generate a final list of schools in need of improvement for 2018-2019.

Due to the extraordinary circumstances created by the pandemic, the USED invited State educational agencies (SEAs) to apply for a waiver from the accountability requirements of the ESEA for the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years and the assessment requirements for the 2019-2020 school year. New Jersey applied for and received these waivers. As part of the accountability waiver, New Jersey agreed to resume identifying schools for comprehensive, targeted, and additional targeted support in fall 2022 based on data from the 2021-2022 school year. The NJDOE was approved through the COVID-19 State Plan Addendum for a one-time change in frequency to identify schools in fall 2023 (based on data from the 2022-2023 school year). As a result, the NJDOE identified a new cohort of schools in need of comprehensive support and improvement in both fall 2022 (based on 2021-2022 data) and again in fall 2023 (based on 2022-2023 data). The NJDOE will now resume identifying a new cohort every three years.

[end NJDOE response]

e. Targeted Support and Improvement

Describe the State’s methodology for annually identifying any school with one or more “consistently underperforming” subgroups of students, based on all indicators in the statewide system of annual meaningful differentiation, including the definition used by the State to determine consistent underperformance. (ESEA section 1111(c)(4)(C)(iii))

[begin NJDOE response]

Methodology for Identifying Targeted Support and Improvement Schools: Consistently Underperforming Student Groups (TSI)

The NJDOE will identify schools for targeted support and improvement (TSI) status annually based on performance for the current school year and the prior school year, i.e., two consecutive years. Student groups are identified as “consistently underperforming” if the student group misses all interim targets for all indicators for two consecutive years and performs below the state average for all indicators. A school will be identified for targeted support and improvement if one or more student groups are identified as consistently underperforming.

This means at least one student group:

- Falls in the “No Improvement” or “Progress” performance levels for all available academic achievement, graduation rate (high schools only), and progress toward English language proficiency indicators for two consecutive years⁵;
- Falls in the “Below Standard” performance level for each academic progress indicator (elementary and middle schools only) for two consecutive years;
- Falls in the “Target Not Met” performance level for chronic absenteeism for two consecutive years;
- Performs below the state average for all students (not student group specific state average) for academic achievement, graduation rate, and progress toward English language proficiency indicators in the current year.

Additionally, a school placed in the TSI category has the opportunity to exit status annually should they meet their annual targets or perform above the state average for academic achievement, graduation rate, or progress toward English language proficiency.

[end NJDOE response]

f. Additional Targeted Support

⁵ The “No Improvement” category was added for academic achievement, graduation rate, and progress toward English language proficiency starting with the 2023-2024 school year. For TSI identification for the 2023-2024 school year, the “Target Not Met” performance level will be used to identify student groups that have not met targets for the 2022-2023 school year.

Describe the State’s methodology, for identifying schools in which any subgroup of students, on its own, would lead to identification under ESEA section 1111(c)(4)(D)(i)(I) using the State’s methodology under ESEA section 1111(c)(4)(D), including the year in which the State will first identify such schools and the frequency with which the State will, thereafter, identify such schools. (ESEA section 1111(d)(2)(C)-(D))

[begin NJDOE response]

Methodology for Identifying Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI)

To identify schools for additional targeted support and improvement (ATSI), a summative score is calculated for each student group at each school using the same methodology applied to schools. Any student group with a summative score that is less than or equal to the cut score used to identify schools for comprehensive support and improvement is identified as low-performing. Any school that has one or more student groups identified as low-performing will be identified for additional targeted support and improvement.

Timeline

NJDOE identified the first cohort of schools in need of additional targeted support and improvement in January 2018. Although intended to be released every three years thereafter, the NJDOE received accountability waivers for the 2019-2020 and the 2020-2021 school years due to the pandemic. States were required to identify schools for additional targeted support and improvement in fall 2022 based on data from the 2022-2023 school year. As a result of the waiver, the NJDOE identified schools in both fall 2022 and again in fall 2023 (based on data from the 2022-2023 school year). Thus, the NJDOE identified a new cohort of schools in need of additional targeted support and improvement for low-performing student groups in both fall 2022 (based on 2021-2022 data) and again in fall 2023 (based on 2022-2023 data). Moving forward, a new cohort will be identified every three years.

[end NJDOE response]

g. Additional Statewide Categories of Schools

If the State chooses, at its discretion, to include additional statewide categories of schools, describe those categories.

[begin NJDOE response]

N/A

[end NJDOE response]

vii. Annual Measurement of Achievement (ESEA section 1111(c)(4)(E)(iii))

Describe how the State factors the requirement for 95 percent student participation in statewide mathematics and reading/language arts assessments into the statewide accountability system.

[begin NJDOE response]

Pursuant to Section 1111(c)(4)(E) of ESSA, all states are required to annually measure the achievement of at least 95 percent of all students in each student group. When measuring, calculating, and reporting proficiency rates, states are required to include either a denominator equal to 95 percent of all students (and of each student group as the case may be) or the number of students participating in the assessments. (see Section 1111(c)(4)(E)(ii) of ESSA) For schools that fail to achieve 95 percent participation, any student below the 95 percent threshold will therefore be counted as “not proficient” in the calculation of proficiency rates even though they did not take the exam.

NJDOE will factor the participation rate into its school accountability system by applying the minimum requirements of Section 1111(c)(4)(E) of ESSA. Therefore, the NJDOE will utilize the required methodology described above as its method of factoring the requirement for 95 percent student participation in assessments into the statewide school accountability system.

To ensure schools and school communities have as much actionable information as possible and upon the recommendation from stakeholders, the NJDOE has committed to making proficiency results publicly available in two ways:

1. with participation rate factored in, or based on at least 95% of students in tested grades, and
2. without participation rate or based on the actual number of tested students.

[end NJDOE response]

viii. Continued Support for School and LEA Improvement (ESEA section 1111(d)(3)(A))

a. Exit Criteria for Comprehensive Support and Improvement Schools

Describe the statewide exit criteria, established by the State, for schools identified for comprehensive support and improvement, including the number of years (not to exceed four) over which schools are expected to meet such criteria.

[begin NJDOE response]

A school in need of comprehensive support and improvement has the opportunity to exit status every three years when the identification methodology is used to identify a new cohort of schools. A school may exit status if:

- It is no longer in the bottom 5 percent of Title I schools with an overall performance, based on all applicable indicators and in accordance with the weighting system described in Section 4.1.D(ii), that is at or below the fifth percentile of Title I schools (i.e., the cut score); and
- It demonstrates improved student performance on accountability indicators as compared to student performance at the time of identification for comprehensive support and improvement;
- Its four-year graduation rate is above 67 percent, if a high school; and
- It successfully implemented its approved comprehensive support and improvement plan as confirmed by NJDOE.

CSI schools that do not meet exit criteria after three years, also referred to as Comprehensive II schools, are subject to more rigorous interventions, as described in section viii. c. below.

[end NJDOE response]

b. Exit Criteria for Schools Receiving Additional Targeted Support

Describe the statewide exit criteria, established by the State, for schools receiving additional targeted support under ESEA section 1111(d)(2)(C), including the number of years over which schools are expected to meet such criteria.

[begin NJDOE response]

A school with low-performing student groups identified as ATSI has the opportunity to exit status every three years when the identification methodology is used to identify a new cohort of schools. A school may exit status if it:

- No longer has a student group whose overall performance, based on all applicable indicators and in accordance with the weighting system described in section A.4.v, is at or below the fifth percentile of Title I schools; and
- Demonstrates, for the student group(s) for which the school was identified as in need of additional targeted support and improvement, improved student performance on accountability indicators as compared to student performance at the time of identification.

Title I-funded ATSI schools that do not meet exit criteria after three years (the State-determined timeline for exit) will be identified as needing comprehensive support and improvement.

Note: If a school identified as ATSI meets some but not all of the exit criteria listed above, the NJDOE may place the school on probation for a period of one year. An ATSI school on probation must continue to meet all requirements as listed in ESEA section 1111(d)(2), including the development and implementation of a targeted support and improvement plan and identification of resource inequities that are addressed through the implementation of the plan. After one year, if all exit criteria are met, the school will no longer be identified as having a low-performing student group(s).

[end NJDOE response]

c. More Rigorous Interventions

Describe the more rigorous interventions required for schools identified for comprehensive support and improvement that fail to meet the State’s exit criteria within a State-determined number of years consistent with section 1111(d)(3)(A)(i)(I) of the ESEA.

[begin NJDOE response]

NJDOE regulations (N.J.A.C. 6A:33-4.1(e)) include various supports and interventions for Comprehensive II schools, or a school that was previously identified as needing comprehensive support and requiring more rigorous intervention. These schools will have increased scrutiny regarding equity in resource distribution and the opportunity for additional resources to implement new initiatives, which may include an external evaluation and leadership coaching for school principals. If a provider is utilized, the provider must submit an initial report outlining needs and recommended interventions to the LEA’s board of education and the NJDOE and, thereafter, produce annual reports regarding progress.

Current State regulations also require LEA board of education members of LEAs with Comprehensive II schools to receive additional training in governance and oversight. The provider is accountable to NJDOE, as well as the LEA’s board of education. In addition to the regulatory authority to order advanced interventions, the Commissioner of Education has the authority under State law (N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-6) to require LEAs to redirect state and local funds to address deficiencies, including, but not limited to:

- Directing the restructuring of curriculum or programs;
- Directing staff retraining or reassignment;
- Conducting a comprehensive budget evaluation;
- Redirecting expenditures;
- Enforcing spending at the full adequacy budget; and
- Reviewing the terms of future collective bargaining agreements, notwithstanding any provisions of the New Jersey Employer-Employee Relations Act, P.L.1941, c.100 (N.J.S.A. 34:13A-1 et seq.) to the contrary.

The NJDOE will monitor LEA progress quarterly and additional interventions will be applied as necessary.

[end NJDOE response]

d. Resource Allocation Review

Describe how the State will periodically review resource allocation to support school improvement in each LEA in the State serving a significant number or percentage of schools identified for comprehensive or targeted support and improvement.

[begin NJDOE Response]

Resource Allocation Reviews

The NJDOE will facilitate a resource allocation review process in each LEA that serves a significant number of schools identified as CSI, ATSI, or TSI. The reviews will be conducted every three years following the identification of schools for comprehensive or targeted support and improvement. The objectives of the resource allocation review process are to:

- Examine LEAs resource allocation profiles and identify trends;
- Engage in meaningful discussion with LEAs on the opportunities for more strategic resource utilization; and,
- Provide guidance to LEA leaders in conducting resource equity reviews to leverage resources and maximize student outcomes.

Toward this end, the resource allocation review process will examine the relationship between resource distribution and student outcomes as reflected in various metrics, including:

- Intra-district comparisons of schools' demographics, resource allocation, and student outcomes; and,
- Inter-district comparisons (with surrounding and/or demographically similar LEAs) on per-pupil spending and student data.

[end NJDOE response]

e. Technical Assistance

Describe the technical assistance the State will provide to each LEA in the State serving a significant number or percentage of schools identified for comprehensive or targeted support and improvement.

[begin NJDOE response]

State System of Differentiated Support and Improvement

2024 Updates

The NJDOE plans to enhance New Jersey’s differentiated support and improvement system relative to more rigorous interventions for schools identified for comprehensive support and improvement that fail to make progress. The first substantive change includes removing an intensive NJDOE data review for schools needing comprehensive improvement that fail to make progress within two years of designation. Additionally, pursuant to changes in State regulations (N.J.A.C. 6A:33-4.1), the NJDOE will no longer appoint one or more qualified external providers for schools that fail to demonstrate progress despite multiple years of intervention.

State regulations (N.J.A.C. 6A:33-4.1(e)) include various supports and interventions for Comprehensive II schools, including increased equity in resource distribution and the opportunity for additional resources to implement new initiatives, which include an external evaluation and leadership coaching for school principals. Current state regulations also require LEA boards of education with Comprehensive II schools to receive additional training in governance and oversight.

Description

Based on data analysis, feedback from practitioners and other stakeholders, and a review of research on the science of school improvement and implementing evidence-based practices sustainably, the NJDOE has developed a multi-level system of support and intervention to provide every student the opportunity for success in school and enable every student to graduate from high school prepared for post-secondary success.

Under ESSA, the unit of change is the LEA rather than the school; similarly, NJDOE has focused on the LEA as the unit of change. As part of the state system of differentiated support and improvement, NJDOE will issue tools and sample frameworks for needs assessment and planning based on improvement and implementation science that focus improvement efforts on evidence-based interventions, matched to the specific accountability indicators that resulted in the school’s designation as a school in need of targeted or comprehensive improvement. This approach will help LEAs focus their school improvement efforts. The approach will also facilitate monitoring of outcomes related to both progress toward annual and long-term school accountability targets and implementation of the selected evidence-based interventions. Fidelity and performance data will be used by schools to determine if the right interventions were selected and implemented as designed. The tools and sample frameworks will be optional for LEAs that receive Level 2 support and required for LEAs that receive Level 3 support. Levels 1, 2, and 3 are described below.

Key components of the system at the state level include:

Ongoing Data Analysis and Needs Assessment

The NJDOE will analyze NJQSAC results, school performance reports, input from educators, parents, and other stakeholders, and other data to identify the types of support the NJDOE will provide to all LEAs and schools. The analysis will also identify the more intensive assistance that will be provided to LEAs with schools in need of targeted or comprehensive support and improvement. The NJDOE will conduct this data analysis annually to evaluate the effectiveness of the system and identify any needed changes.

Coordinated Support Mechanisms

Offices across the NJDOE will be involved in providing coordinated support to all LEAs and schools, including schools identified for targeted or comprehensive support and improvement. The NJDOE teams will determine priority areas and levels of support. Schools in need of comprehensive support will primarily work with leadership coaches from comprehensive support and improvement teams. Other NJDOE staff with expertise in curriculum and instruction, fiscal planning, support for students with disabilities, or support for multilingual learners will provide coaching to schools depending upon the reason for identification and the comprehensive plan developed by the school and its LEA. The NJDOE's county offices will also provide support to LEAs and schools in need of comprehensive or targeted support. The NJDOE will develop a protocol for coaching LEA staff that builds capacity and fosters autonomy. The coaching model will include data collection to measure achievement.

Coordinated Improvement Planning Protocol

Schools that operate Title I schoolwide programs will have a single plan that will satisfy the requirements for the Title I schoolwide program plan and the comprehensive or targeted support and improvement plan. This will promote a more coordinated, effective use of resources. For all LEAs that have schools identified for targeted or comprehensive support and improvement, a critical element of coordination will be the alignment of the school improvement plans with the district/LEA improvement plan under NJQSAC, as well as any other LEA strategic plans submitted to and approved by the NJDOE.

Support Planning

Comprehensive support teams will work with leaders from LEAs with a significant number of identified schools to build a state-support plan, which will delineate NJDOE's support efforts. The level of support will be based on the school's comprehensive or targeted support and improvement plans, the available state-level data, the length of time the school has been low-performing, the outcomes of previously implemented intervention strategies, etc.

The NJDOE plans to leverage internal and external resources to implement a seamless structure of tiered technical assistance with an emphasis on building LEA capacity to problem-solve, select, implement, and evaluate the effectiveness of evidence-based practices in a way that fosters sustainability. NJQSAC will be aligned with the school accountability requirements under ESSA to create a continuum of support by utilizing the central office, county office, comprehensive support teams, and external resources to address specific needs.

Stakeholder feedback indicated that the type and level of support for LEAs with schools in need of support should not be one-size-fits-all. In response, the NJDOE will ensure the level of support provided will be differentiated based on multiple sources of data that include: the ESSA summative rating,

NJSAC rating, school performance reports, district/LEA improvement plans, and other available local and state data. Differentiation will also occur within the support levels described below. In collaboration with LEA leadership, the NJDOE will determine the types of assistance it will provide the LEAs with schools in need of support to promote consistency, build LEA capacity, and to better leverage the NJDOE's technical assistance.

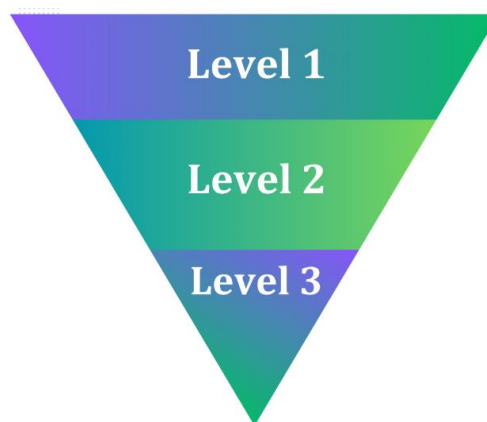
The NJDOE heard from stakeholders about the importance of engaging parents, families, and community members as partners to improve the success and sustainability of school improvement efforts. At a minimum, if a school in an LEA is identified as needing support and improvement, the LEA must notify its board of education and the parents of students attending that school. Additionally, identified schools are required to have a parent and community member on the school improvement team that assists in creating the school improvement plan.

Through technical assistance, the NJDOE works with LEAs to meaningfully engage their stakeholders. For example, NJDOE staff will encourage LEAs and school leaders to provide updates to community stakeholders on the status of meeting goals established in the school improvement plan or remind LEAs what types of federal funds (e.g. Title I, Part A, Section 1003) can be used to engage stakeholders such as parents and community members. The NJDOE's position is that diverse stakeholder engagement is critical to school improvement, and school data and feedback should be reviewed collectively as part of a robust and effective continuous improvement process.

The proposed levels of support are as follows:

Level 1 Support

Level 1 support will be provided to all LEAs, including those identified under NJSAC as high-performing, with no schools identified needing comprehensive or targeted support and improvement. The supports designed for all LEAs and communities include but are not limited to: information and resources for needs assessment, improvement planning, implementation, and evaluation of effectiveness. LEAs will be invited to participate in statewide training and webinars and will have access to resources and material through the NJDOE.



Level 2 Support

Level 2 support will be provided to LEAs that have no schools identified as CSI and less than a total of three schools identified as ATSI or TSI. The LEAs might also have LEA improvement plans related to a NJSAC review.

LEAs eligible for Level 2 support have the primary responsibility for conducting needs assessments and developing LEA improvement plans that are complementary and focused on the identified needs. LEAs identified for Level 2 support will be notified of the LEA's and/or school's responsibilities under state and federal laws, including a process for approval and progress monitoring of targeted support and improvement plans. The NJDOE will make available tools and templates for a comprehensive needs assessment, targeted needs assessments of student group needs, targeted support and improvement plans,

and information on other evidence-based systems, programs, and/or strategies. The NJDOE will provide support to the LEAs through activities such as webinars, large group presentations, and county-level work sessions to facilitate the use of the tools and the development of coordinated plans that meet students' needs.

Based on a review of available data, NJDOE will work in partnership with an LEA and its schools in need of targeted support to determine the benefit from participation in state-sponsored programs, targeted technical assistance, or other available opportunities. Based on need, the LEAs may be offered coaching in evidence-based practices, or the LEAs will be able to use federal funds to purchase coaching, other professional development, and/or materials related to evidence-based practices designed to improve performance for specific student groups or to address specific indicators (e.g., chronic absenteeism). Participation will be optional unless a school has not demonstrated growth after three years of implementation of its targeted support and improvement plan. Additionally, if the LEA has a significant number of schools, three or more, in need of targeted support and improvement, they are provided with Level 3 support.

The NJDOE will also consider requests for support from LEAs. As needed and appropriate, the NJDOE and/or third-party providers identified and/or contracted by the NJDOE for specific programs will coordinate and/or address these requests.

Annually, the NJDOE will review the summative ratings of schools in need of targeted support and improvement to determine progress. If progress is not being made or schools do not meet the NJDOE-established exit criteria, NJDOE staff will work collaboratively with LEA and school leadership to review the improvement plan strategies and outcomes and provide additional support to ensure progress as necessary.

Level 3 Support

Level 3 support will be provided to LEAs that have a school or schools identified as in need of comprehensive support and improvement or have a significant number (total of three or more) of TSI and/or ATSI schools. The LEAs also might have an LEA improvement plan resulting from an NJQSAC review.

As part of the Tier 3 interventions, the NJDOE will review and work collaboratively with LEAs to develop the comprehensive or targeted support and improvement plans submitted by the LEAs; provide support on data analysis, planning, and implementing interventions; and monitor progress on plan implementation. The NJDOE will also ensure that all improvement plans include evidence-based interventions that are aligned with long-term LEA plans. Applying principles identified in implementation and improvement research, the NJDOE will ensure results are measurable to determine the effectiveness of selected interventions. Additionally, the NJDOE offers LEAs a range of supports depending on the identified needs, which may include:

- School improvement funds to support evidence-based interventions.
- Guidance and assistance in developing school improvement plans.
- Facilitation progress monitoring of the annual school plan(s).
- Support to promote a growth mindset and continuous improvement.
- Coaching school and LEA leaders to support their growth as instructional leaders and enhance their capacity to coach.

- Collaboration with LEA leaders to ensure that schools receive critical support and to identify and implement evidence-based instructional practices.
- Support for teachers' professional learning based on internal data metrics and priorities.
- Facilitation professional growth opportunities related to school and LEA improvement.
- Guidance on the use of federal funds related to school and LEA improvement.
- NJDOE-sponsored programs, targeted technical assistance, and/or other school and LEA improvement opportunities.

Stakeholders have indicated that ready access to improvement plan templates and other resources would also be helpful in planning and implementation. As a result, the NJDOE has a dedicated website for school improvement resources and tools that support needs assessment, identification of supports, interventions, evidence-based programs/practices, etc.

Through guidance and implementation of specific initiatives, the NJDOE will be ensuring LEAs engage local stakeholders throughout the needs assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation phases of improvement efforts.

School Improvement Resources

Consistent with NJDOE's system of differentiated support and improvement, school improvement funds are allocated via formula and/or competitive grants, including the possibility of a limited competitive grant based on priority areas of need. Once NJDOE finalizes the list of schools identified as in need of comprehensive or targeted support and improvement, funds are distributed based on the needs and activities in the approved grant applications to assist in:

- Assessment of school needs based on data;
- Development of an improvement plan;
- Implementation of evidence-based practices linked to student/educator needs; and
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of interventions.

The distribution of school improvement funds may be weighted to provide greater financial support to the highest-need LEAs. Data for all LEAs with schools identified for comprehensive or targeted support will be reviewed annually to determine if current NJDOE initiatives and coaching opportunities meet the needs of identified schools and their students. Additionally, LEAs are required to conduct a resource equity review as part of their annual needs assessment and plan submission to the NJDOE. The NJDOE recognizes that equity in resources is one component of providing equitable access to learning opportunities for students. The NJDOE resource allocation and LEA equity reviews constitute one piece of the more comprehensive planning and progress monitoring for support and improvement in identified LEAs and schools.

[end NJDOE response]

f. Additional Optional Action

If applicable, describe the action the State will take to initiate additional improvement in any LEA with a significant number or percentage of schools that are consistently identified by the State for comprehensive support and improvement and are not meeting exit criteria established

by the State or in any LEA with a significant number or percentage of schools implementing targeted support and improvement plans.

[begin NJDOE response]

Level 3 support, as described above, will be provided to any LEA with a significant number (three or more) of schools implementing targeted support and improvement plans. The NJDOE will review the LEA's Title I plans, with a focus on the evidence-based practices portion of the plan. The NJDOE will work with the LEA and schools to identify why the planned activities did not result in the school's expected growth and improvement. The NJDOE will then provide additional technical guidance to assist the LEA in improving implementation or identifying different interventions. In addition, the NJDOE will increase fiscal allotments to LEAs with a significant number or percentage of schools consistently identified for comprehensive support and improvement if they consistently use school improvement funding. See above for the NJDOE description of the resource allocation 'review process and protocol as an additional lever of support for LEAs with a significant number or percentage of schools consistently identified for comprehensive or targeted support and improvement.

[end NJDOE response]

5. Disproportionate Rates of Access to Educators (ESEA section 1111(g)(1)(B))

Describe how low-income and minority children enrolled in schools assisted under Title I, Part A are not served at disproportionate rates by ineffective, out-of-field, or inexperienced teachers, and the measures the SEA will use to evaluate and publicly report the progress of the SEA with respect to such description. (Consistent with ESEA section 1111(g)(1)(B), this description should not be construed as requiring a State to develop or implement a teacher, principal, or other school leader evaluation system.)

[begin NJDOE response]

Introduction and 2024 Updates

The response to this question includes updates since the 2017 ESSA State Plan. The NJDOE will continue to report state-level educator equity data through its annual school performance reports. These reports are used to evaluate and publicly report the progress of ensuring that minority or economically disadvantaged students enrolled in schools assisted under Title I, Part A are not served at disproportionate rates by ineffective, out-of-field, or inexperienced teachers. As stated in its FY19 School Performance Review Corrective Action Plan, the NJDOE will annually share and review school performance reports and LEA-level reports with LEAs to offer technical assistance and support as needed. To improve the quality of information used to evaluate LEA needs in this area, the NJDOE is amending the 2017 ESSA State Plan definition of "inexperienced teacher."

The information below includes the rates at which students are taught by out-of-field, ineffective, and inexperienced teachers and shows possible educator equity gaps for low-income and minority students across New Jersey. These rates have been updated since 2017. Note the terms “minority children” and “low-income” while not aligned to New Jersey’s efforts to use asset-based language, are used within the ESSA State Plan and for annual school performance report requirements. The term is used here to align with the language of federal law.

Percentages at Which Students are Taught by Out-of-field Teachers

All students deserve teachers who are prepared to teach a subject matter at the appropriate grade level. New Jersey has a rigorous licensure system to ensure teachers are prepared to positively impact student outcomes in year one in the classroom. According to 2022-2023 Statewide Educator Equity Data, the NJDOE identified 2,811 instances where a New Jersey teacher was working out-of-field (this represents approximately 2.4 percent of the teaching population) even though State certification regulations prohibit educators from working outside of the subject for which they are licensed. Student-level data revealed that equity gaps persist between racial and ethnic student groups and between economically disadvantaged and non-economically disadvantaged students.

The chart below shows the out-of-field statewide comparison, in which 19.52 percent of students from economically disadvantaged families in Title I Schools are taught by one or more teachers who are out-of-field, compared to 15.46 percent of all students across the State and compared to 9.96 percent of non-low-income students in non-title I schools. Additionally, 18.62 percent of minority students were taught by one or more teachers who are out-of-field.

Category	Percentage of Students Overall	Percentage of Low-Income Students in Title I Schools	Percentage of Non-Low-Income Students in Non-Title I Schools	Percentage of Minority Students in Title I Schools	Percentage of Non-Minority Students in Non-Title I Schools
Students taught by one or more teachers who are out-of-field	15.46%	19.52%	9.96%	18.62%	10.43%

Percentages at Which Students Are Taught by Ineffective Teachers

The chart below shows the ineffective statewide comparison, in which 0.39 percent of students from economically disadvantaged families in Title I Schools are taught by one or more teachers who are ineffective, compared to 0.16 percent of all students across the State and compared to less than 0.01 percent of non-low-income students in non-title I schools. Additionally, 0.35 percent of minority students were taught by one or more teachers who are ineffective. The chart below includes the 2019-2020 Educator Equity Data.

Category	Percentage of Students Overall	Percentage of Low-Income Students in Title I Schools	Percentage of Non-Low-Income Students in Non-Title I Schools	Percentage of Minority Students in Title I Schools	Percentage of Non-Minority Students in Non-Title I Schools
Students taught by one or more ineffective teacher	0.16%	0.39%	Less than 0.01%	0.35%	Less than 0.01%

Percentages at Which Students are Taught by at Least one Inexperienced Teacher

The number of students who have at least one inexperienced teacher has historically been very high (over three-quarters of all students), with less variation between student groups. The proposed changes below aim to improve the quality of data collected in this category.

The chart below shows the inexperienced teacher statewide comparison, in which 80.46 percent of students from economically disadvantaged families in Title I Schools are taught by one or more teachers who are inexperienced, compared to 79.79 percent of all students across the State and compared to 76.86 percent of non-low-income students in non-title I schools. Additionally, 80.33 percent of minority students were taught by one or more teachers who are inexperienced.

Category	Percentage of Students Overall	Percentage of Low-Income Students in Title I Schools	Percentage of Non-Low-Income Students in Non-Title I Schools	Percentage of Minority Students in Title I Schools	Percentage of Non-Minority Students in Non-Title I Schools
Students taught by one or more inexperienced teacher	79.79%	80.46%	76.86%	80.33%	75.68%

Definitions

The NJDOE found that by defining “inexperienced teacher” as an educator with fewer than four years of prior experience within a given LEA, the statewide and LEA-level data failed to provide the NJDOE with a nuanced understanding of staffing needs. Updating the definition to mean an educator with fewer than four years of prior experience will enable reviewers to differentiate schools based on overall experience in the teaching profession, not just teachers who are new to the LEA.

Therefore, the NJDOE has amended the definition of “inexperienced” and will maintain the other definitions captured in the 2017 ESSA State Plan. The chart below includes the described updates and additional minor updates for clarity and language consistency.

Figure A.21: Statewide definitions for key terms

Key Term	Statewide Definition
Below effective teacher	An educator who receives an annual summative evaluation rating of “ineffective” or “partially effective” (i.e., < 2.65/4.0) on the AchieveNJ evaluation system (N.J.A.C. 6A:10).
Ineffective teacher	An educator who receives an annual summative evaluation rating of “ineffective” (i.e., < 1.85/4.0) on the AchieveNJ evaluation system (N.J.A.C. 6A:10).
Inexperienced teacher	An educator with fewer than four years of prior experience.
Economically disadvantaged student	A student who is eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, identified as “economically disadvantaged” in New Jersey.
Minority student	A student of color, which includes the following student groups: American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander; Black or African American; Hispanic/Latino; and two or more races.
Out-of-field teacher	An educator who teaches outside his/her area of certification as determined by the NJDOE.

LEA Technical Assistance

To support LEAs, the NJDOE will annually share and review school performance reports and LEA-level reports with LEAs to offer technical assistance and support, as needed. Embedded in existing technical assistance and systems of review including the development of each LEA’s Comprehensive Equity Plan, staff from the NJDOE Division of Field Support and Services will work with LEAs to analyze educator data. The NJDOE staff will offer additional targeted supports to LEAs in which minority students or economically disadvantaged students in Title I, Part A schools are more likely than their non-low-income or White peers to be taught by ineffective, inexperienced, and out-of-field teachers.

[end NJDOE response]

6. School Conditions (ESEA section 1111(g)(1)(C))

Describe how the SEA agency will support LEAs receiving assistance under Title I, Part A to improve school conditions for student learning, including through reducing:

- i. incidences of bullying and harassment;
 - ii. the overuse of discipline practices that remove students from the classroom; and
 - iii. the use of aversive behavioral interventions that compromise student health and safety.
-

[begin NJDOE response]

Introduction

The NJDOE has a long-standing history of providing educators with a wealth of resources and professional learning opportunities to meet the unique needs of their students. In recent years, there has been increased focus on creating safe learning communities as data trends show that students continue to exhibit behavioral and mental health challenges since the pandemic. Likewise, schools that utilize positive approaches to discipline typically have greater success engaging students.

Supporting social and emotional learning continues to be a priority area since research shows that students who attend schools with positive school climates and are taught social and emotional learning skills are more likely to attend school. The NJDOE intends to continue to support LEAs in improving school conditions for learning for all students by enhancing school climate, promoting social and emotional learning, and using positive approaches to discipline. The NJDOE will provide LEAs with support by connecting them with resources that best fit the needs and priorities of the various activities identified in this section. Also, the NJDOE plans to disseminate information and assist LEAs in implementing social and emotional learning competencies.

As described in the 2017 ESSA State Plan, the NJDOE has taken significant steps to promote policies and practices that lead to positive school climates. Example policies include those that prohibit harassment, intimidation, or bullying; quality school climate improvement strategies; codes of student conduct that stress positive behavioral expectations and parameters for intervention and remediation; drug and alcohol prevention and intervention programs; and intervention and referral services designed to support students with learning, behavior, or health difficulties and assist staff who have difficulties in addressing pupils' learning, behavior, or health needs. The NJDOE has provided guidance, programs, and services in collaboration with state and community agencies to promote safe and supportive schools through data collection, reporting and requests for assistance.

New Jersey Tiered System of Supports (NJTSS) and New Jersey Positive Behavior Supports in Schools (NJPBSIS)

The NJDOE's leadership and commitment are indicated in its support of the implementation of evidence-based practices¹ through the New Jersey Tiered System of Supports (NJTSS) and the New Jersey Positive Behavior Support in Schools (NJPBSIS) initiative. NJTSS includes a positive school culture and climate as one of its foundational pillars. Additionally, the tiered system promotes positive behavioral interventions as a strategy to effectively address the needs of all students.

NJPBSIS, which is supported with IDEA Part B funding, is a collaboration between the NJDOE and The Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities at the Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. NJPBSIS began in 2000 and provides extensive training and technical assistance to schools across New Jersey. NJPBSIS requests that LEAs that have received training provide annual fidelity inventories to maintain a list of implementers. From year to year, approximately 200 schools provide their implementation data. Schools implementing at 70 percent fidelity or above are recognized with a digital “badge” that can be displayed on their website. Annually, LEA-level suspension data is compiled, and the top 10 percent of LEAs with the highest suspension rates of students with disabilities are invited to apply to the NJPBSIS training cohort. NJPBSIS is a whole-school, multi-tiered preventative approach that has consistently resulted in reduced office conduct referrals and out-of-school suspensions for both general education students as well as students with disabilities when it is implemented at 70 percent fidelity or higher.

Annually, NJPBSIS enrolls a new cohort of up to 35 schools for a three-year professional development process. Enrollment is open to all LEAs, and to screen for readiness and administrative commitment, only schools selected through the competitive application process are eligible for training and coaching support. However, extensive resources are available online for any school interested in implementing the approach.

School Climate

To support schools in their assessment of school climate, the NJDOE, in collaboration with the School Climate Transformation Project (SCTP) at Rutgers University, developed the New Jersey School Climate Improvement Survey (NJ-SCI) which replaces the New Jersey School Climate Survey (NJCSC) and was developed with the specific needs of New Jersey schools in mind. The NJ-SCI Survey is designed to help schools identify school climate strengths and needs and use data to create strategic plans to improve conditions for teaching and learning. The NJ-SCI platform is a free, web-based application designed to increase LEA and school access to tools and resources for data-driven school climate improvement planning and implementation.

This valid, reliable, and free instrument can be used to collect and analyze responses across five domains from students, staff, and parents/caregivers, as well as measure conditions for learning in eight areas to reinforce positive conditions and address vulnerabilities in local learning conditions. The survey and associated communication tools are available in multiple languages for students and parents/caregivers. The NJDOE developed the School Climate Survey for LEA and school leadership teams to analyze the results of the school climate survey, identify climate needs, and select, implement, and sustain appropriate interventions, such as PBSIS. Online resources are provided to expand and assist LEAs with identifying strategies and evidence-based interventions to meet identified needs. The NJDOE has also finalized the development of social and emotional learning competencies and support materials to promote positive school climates and positive approaches to improving student behavior. Social and emotional learning competencies and support materials are the result of an NJDOE-led working group comprised of NJDOE staff from numerous divisions; teachers and administrators; leaders of statewide education associations; experts in the areas of school climate and social and emotional learning; and representatives from higher education, juvenile justice, mental health, substance use, suicide prevention, disabilities, child protection and career and technical education. For the past two years, the working group reviewed research, examined standards in other states, and developed the competencies and support materials to provide

schools with practical resources that can be implemented with fidelity and sustained to support the positive development of students.

The NJDOE is committed to assisting LEAs with supporting learning environments that increase engagement and motivation and positively impact academic achievement, graduation rates, and student behavior. The focus on specific instructional strategies in the development of online instructional resources designed through the lens of the [Universal Design for Learning \(UDL\) framework](#) will allow educators the opportunity to master research-based practices that make a difference. These resources, combined with intradepartmental, collaborative, targeted assistance with the NJDOE initiatives referenced above directly support the fulfillment of a well-rounded education.

Comprehensive Supports to Promote Attendance

To supplement current efforts described above as well as to assist LEAs in reducing rates of chronic absenteeism, the NJDOE used state-level funds to support a staff member who provides leadership in the development and implementation of:

1. Best practices and programs for addressing chronic absenteeism;
2. Strategies to monitor and evaluate chronic absenteeism;
3. Prevention and intervention programs and techniques;
4. Training, technical assistance, and resources; and
5. Cleaning, analyzing and reporting of chronic absenteeism data. Chronic absenteeism rates, which are included in the State's ESSA accountability system, may also be used as one measure to help LEAs continually assess their school climate and social and emotional learning efforts.

Most recently, *Data-Based Decision Making for Addressing Chronic Absenteeism* was developed to provide LEAs with guidance on responding to chronic absenteeism. The guidance incorporates New Jersey-specific rules, regulations, and a span of available resources. LEAs are encouraged to refer to this resource to develop research-based action plans that include strategies that specifically target the barriers contributing to their students' absences. This resource provides a step-by-step guide that begins with identifying key LEA members, collecting and analyzing actionable data, and supports the LEA in ultimately installing and operating a tiered model to address student absenteeism and encourage regular attendance.

For students to learn and achieve to their fullest potential, it is critical that they are in school and engaged in the learning process. The idea behind a multi-tiered approach is that the majority of students will respond to school-wide strategies for improving attendance and engagement (Tier 1 supports) but that these strategies won't be sufficient for all students: some students require more personalized support (Tier 2) and an even smaller number may need more intensive measures (Tier 3) to reengage them with school. Research shows that student absences impact a child's ability to succeed in school.²

In addition to the support mentioned above, the NJDOE will continue to support LEAs in using funds under Title I, Part A to address the needs of the whole child, which includes students' social and emotional well-being. Currently, the NJDOE encourages LEAs to engage in a comprehensive review of school culture including student discipline and behavior, setting learning objectives for social and emotional learning, conflict resolution, school safety, and programs initiatives and approaches related to school climate as part of their needs assessment for Title I, Part A. By identifying these issues as needs that impact students' academic success, LEAs can use their Title I, Part A funds to implement the

appropriate interventions and professional development to address issues such as bullying and harassment, as well as questionable disciplinary practices. Additionally, in collaboration with stakeholders, the NJDOE is publishing an “ESSA Activity-Based Guidance” document to support LEAs’ use of Title I, Part A funds, including but not limited to multi-tiered systems of support, such as the [New Jersey Tiered System of Support \(NJTSS\)](#). The resource guides LEAs on how to use Title I, Part A funds to support a system that is successful in:

- Addressing academic, behavioral, social-emotional, and health needs of students using data;
- Promoting a positive school climate and social and emotional learning;
- Reducing disproportionality;
- Using positive approaches to discipline to reduce the use of exclusionary disciplinary practices, such as suspensions, and aversive behavioral interventions; and
- Improving academic achievement and achievement of post-secondary goals.

[end NJDOE response]

7. School Transitions (ESEA section 1111(g)(1)(D))

Describe how the State will support LEAs receiving assistance under Title I, Part A in meeting the needs of students at all levels of schooling (particularly students in the middle grades and high school), including how the State will work with such LEAs to provide effective transitions of students to middle grades and high school to decrease the risk of students dropping out.

[begin NJDOE response]

The NJDOE is committed to supporting LEAs, especially those receiving Title I, Part A funds, in addressing the needs of students transitioning across various educational levels. This includes transitions from early childhood education to elementary school, elementary school to middle school, middle school to high school, and high school to post-secondary education and careers.

To facilitate effective transitions, the NJDOE emphasizes collaboration among LEAs, particularly due to the State's diverse LEA configurations, such as elementary-only and high school-only LEAs. Recognizing the importance of seamless transitions, the NJDOE has implemented initiatives to enhance data quality and visibility between LEAs, post-secondary institutions, state agencies, and stakeholders.

For example, the NJDOE has expanded its Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) to encompass data from birth through schooling and into the workforce, enabling comprehensive tracking of student progress and outcomes. Additionally, partnerships with other state agencies have led to initiatives such as the New Jersey Enterprise Analysis System for Early Learning (NJ EASEL) and the New Jersey Education to Earnings System (NJ EEDS), focusing on collecting data related to early care and education opportunities, college attainment, career pathways, and earnings.

For students with disabilities, the NJDOE utilizes data from the Statewide Longitudinal Data System to tailor supports, such as person-centered planning and community-based instruction, to facilitate successful transitions to post-secondary education and employment. Additionally, the Office of Adult

Education works to serve the needs of adult learners in attaining their high school diploma and pursuing their educational and career goals.

The NJDOE will continue to help high schools, colleges, and universities, certification and other training programs, and workforce representatives work collaboratively to determine how each entity can support effective transitions from high school to post-secondary education and career opportunities. The Office of Career Readiness, through the Unit of Adult Education, will continue to serve the needs of adult learners and youth (aged 16 and over) in attaining their state-issued high school diploma to achieve their educational, career, and personal goals. The Office of Career Readiness will continue to leverage standing advisory groups, partners such as adult high schools, local workforce development boards, the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, and other ad hoc groups to help the NJDOE determine how it can continue to support students transitioning to post-secondary education and career opportunities.

Overall, the NJDOE's comprehensive approach aims to promote smooth transitions at all levels of education, ensuring that all students receive the support they need to succeed academically and transition successfully into adulthood.

[end NJDOE response]

B. Title I, Part C: Education of Migratory Children

[begin NJDOE response]

Introduction

Title I, Part C, or the Migrant Education Program (MEP), is a limited, competitive grant program for students aged 3 through 21. MEP funds support high-quality education programs for eligible migratory children and help ensure that migratory children who move among the States are not penalized by disparities among States in curriculum, graduation requirements, and challenging State academic standards. Funds also ensure that eligible migratory children are not only provided with appropriate education and support services that address their unique needs but also that such children receive full and appropriate opportunities to meet the same challenging State academic standards that all children are expected to meet. Supports provided through this title are not meant to represent all support received by migratory children, but rather they serve as supplemental support to those provided to all of New Jersey's students.

New Jersey's Title I, Part C allocation is derived from the number of resident migrant students and the number of migrant students who receive services outside the regular academic year. The MEP programs focus on the provision of the following services for eligible students: identification and recruitment (ID&R) of students; the intrastate and interstate transfer of student records; supplemental instruction; and health and other support services.

The NJDOE provides annual grants to strategically located local operating agencies (LOAs) to implement the MEP. The LOAs are selected through a competitive grant process. Services through the MEP are provided, in large part, by LOAs, which are select LEAs the State contracts with to carry out the MEP. The LOAs work closely with the NJDOE to develop and carry out a comprehensive plan, known as the MEP Service Delivery Plan, under Section 1306(a)(1) of ESSA. The MEP Service Delivery Plan:

- Is integrated with other federal programs, particularly those authorized by the ESEA (such as Title I, Part A and Title III, Part A);
- Provides migrant children an opportunity to meet the same challenging State academic standards that all students are expected to meet;
- Specifies measurable program goals and outcomes;
- Encompasses the full range of services that are available to migrant children from appropriate local, state, and federal educational programs; and
- Is the product of joint planning among administrators of local, state, and federal programs, including Title I, Part A, early childhood programs and language instruction educational programs (LIEPs) under Title III, Part A.

In summary, at the local level, the Service Delivery Plan specifically addresses the needs that must be met for migratory children to participate effectively in school. For additional details on New Jersey's MEP, see the latest Service Delivery Plan on the [New Jersey Migrant Education Program](#) webpage. The

following section describes how New Jersey, in conjunction with LOAs, will meet the unique educational needs of migratory children.

[end NJDOE response]

1. Supporting Needs of Migratory Children (ESEA section 1304(b)(1))

Describe how, in planning, implementing, and evaluating programs and projects assisted under Title I, Part C, the State and its local operating agencies will ensure that the unique educational needs of migratory children, including preschool migratory children and migratory children who have dropped out of school, are identified, and addressed through:

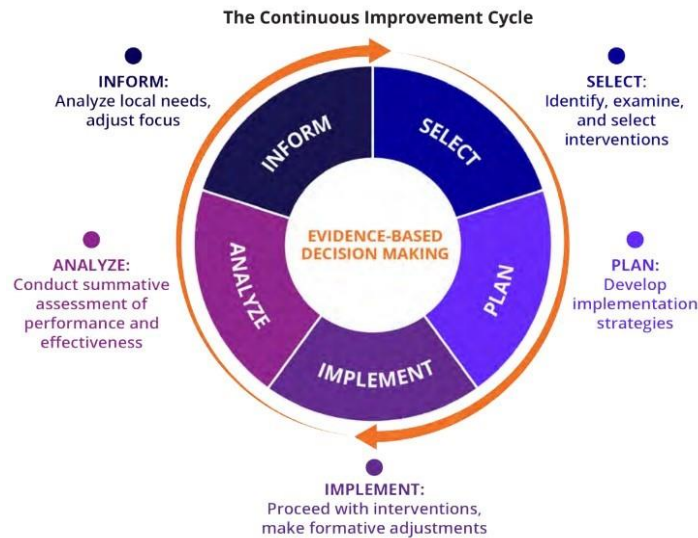
- i. The full range of services that are available for migratory children from appropriate local, State, and Federal educational programs;
 - ii. Joint planning among local, State, and Federal educational programs serving migratory children, including language instruction educational programs under Title III, Part A;
 - iii. The integration of services available under Title I, Part C with services provided by those other programs; and
 - iv. Measurable program objectives and outcomes.
-

[begin NJDOE response]

Service Delivery Plan: How Migratory Children's Needs are Identified in New Jersey

On a three-year cycle, the NJDOE works alongside its partners to develop and/or revise its Service Delivery Plan using a continuous improvement process recommended by the USED Office of Migrant Education. The process begins with a Statewide comprehensive needs assessment, which consists of an in-depth review of data on migrant students and their progress toward program goals, identification of student and staff needs, and specific recommendations for program improvements. This process occurs regularly as part of a process of continuous improvement. In addition to identifying the needs of migratory students more generally, the needs assessment specifically identifies the unique and specialized needs of preschool-aged migratory children and migratory out-of-school youth. The Statewide comprehensive needs assessment serves as the foundation for the Service Delivery Plan process. Key stakeholders convene to review the Statewide comprehensive needs assessment findings, develop implementation strategies, and develop Measurable Performance Outcomes (MPOs) to assess the impact on student progress.

The Service Delivery Plan is updated every three years as part of a continuous improvement process described above and the latest version is available publicly on the [NJDOE's Migrant Education Program website](#).



[Text Version: The Continuous Improvement Cycle](#)

Parent Input into the Service Delivery Plan

It is particularly important for the NJDOE to gather input from migrant parents regarding their children's needs and update the State's Service Delivery Plan regularly. Therefore, the NJDOE-awarded LOAs make an extraordinary effort to obtain parental input. Parents are notified through the dissemination of flyers, personalized telephone calls, and recruiter/intervention specialist visits to participate in the planning and operation of the MEP. Interested parents are invited to attend the annual meetings of the regional LOA's parent advisory committee, and specifically the triennial formal meetings of the Statewide comprehensive needs assessment and Service Delivery Plan update committees. Meetings are held virtually; however, parents are encouraged and supported to attend in person and, when necessary, through the provision of transportation, childcare, and meals. During these meetings, parents are encouraged to provide feedback, both verbally and through the completion of program surveys, on the needs of their children and to identify the most effective services and most pressing needs statewide.

Four Key Areas of Needs Identified through a Comprehensive Needs Assessment

Based on the process described above, New Jersey identified the following needs for the years 2023-2026 across four key areas:

1. ELA and Mathematics,
2. School Readiness,
3. High School Graduation and out-of-school youth Achievement, and
4. Support Services.

Area 1: ELA and Mathematics

- English language development is lower than expected for migratory students, especially in upper elementary through high school.
- Migratory students score proficient at a significantly lower rate than non-migratory students on the New Jersey Student Learning Assessments (NJSLA) in ELA and mathematics.

Area 2: School Readiness

- Migratory preschoolers are unprepared for kindergarten due to gaps in their preschool learning experiences and language development (both in English and the home language).
- Migratory families have limited knowledge of and/or difficulty accessing instructional services available to their preschool children.

Area 3: High School Graduation and Out-of-School Youth Achievement

- Secondary migratory students are scoring at a lower proficiency rate than non-migratory students on the NJSLA in ELA and math, especially following virtual learning during the pandemic where MEP staff observed less engagement from migratory students compared to non-migratory peers.
- Migratory students are not participating in college and career readiness activities due to a lack of awareness and lack of identification with a post-secondary path.
- Migratory out-of-school youth lack the knowledge of basic life skills and access to instruction appropriate for their circumstances due to limited and/or interrupted schooling.
- Migratory out-of-school youth lack the language skills necessary for functioning in an educational setting, career, and/or community.

Area 4: Support Services

- Migratory families lack equitable access to developmentally appropriate reading and math materials and learning tools.
- Migratory families lack the skills, literacy, and strategies to navigate the school system successfully.
- Parents (and other family members) of migratory children lack the skills, literacy, and strategies to provide educational support and enriching experiences in the home.
- Out-of-school youth lack awareness of and access to health and related services and educational programs that fit their schedules and needs.

Strategies and Services to Address Needs, and Measurable Performance Outcomes

LOAs conduct Individual Needs Assessments to:

1. Determine the needs of migrant students and how those needs relate to the priorities established by the State;
2. Design local services; and
3. Select students for the receipt of those services.

The NJDOE and awarded LOAs jointly ensure that needs assessment procedures at the LOA level are aligned with those at the State level; however, LOAs are able to narrow their needs assessments because local staff have access to more precise information. This enables the LOA to identify such critical elements as the specific needs of students by grade levels, academic areas in which the project should focus, instructional settings, instructional materials, staffing, and teaching techniques.

Based on the four key areas of needs outlined above, the NJDOE has identified the following sets of strategies to ensure that the unique needs of migratory students are being met. The strategies in the charts below are designed to be provided to migrant students in addition to the support that is provided to all New Jersey students. Measurable Program Outcomes (MPOs) have also been included for each set of strategies and is used in the annual evaluation process.

Figures B.1: The four tables below list strategies and the myriad of services available for migratory children based on their needs within the options provided to achieve the MPOs.

Area 1: ELA & Mathematics

Strategy	Examples of strategy implementation	Use of MEP funds	Information projects should keep about strategy implementation
1.1) To ensure grade level advancement, provide supplemental tutoring and instruction during the regular school year aligned to the Individual Needs Assessment, which includes identifying yearly goals and quarterly progress monitoring.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After school tutoring. • Staff professional development (PD). • In-school tutoring. • Project-based learning. • Grade reviews. • Attendance reviews. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers and aides for tutoring. • Curriculum materials and supplies. • Book distributions • Local PD • Stipends • Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tutor logs • Individual Needs Assessments • Learning plans • Assessment results
1.2) Provide a stipend to bilingual school-based staff to act as a migratory student liaison to assist in completing the Individual Needs Assessment, build relationships with families and students, assist families in navigating the school system, meet regularly to discuss needs, collaborate with the regional programs, and advocate for migratory students to receive educational interventions available at the school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Migrant student liaisons. • Regular liaison meetings. • Parent meetings. • Advocacy meetings. • Training for migrant liaisons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stipends for bilingual liaisons. • Curriculum materials and supplies. • Local PD • Travel for training and meetings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveys • Agendas • Notes • Evaluations • Tutor logs • Individual Needs Assessments • Learning plans • Assessment results

Strategy	Examples of strategy implementation	Use of MEP funds	Information projects should keep about strategy implementation
1.3) Provide summer school instruction focused on alleviating summer learning loss and increasing ELA and math skills using evidence-based strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporation of art instruction. • Technology instruction and projects. • Theme-based educational field trips. • Hands-on science, technology, engineering, art, and math (STEM/STEAM) activities. • Health and safety education. • Site-based summer school. • Home-based instruction. • Remote instruction. • Access to school library media resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational materials and supplies. • STEM materials. • Transportation for field trips. • Admission fees for field trips. • Print flyers that promote program. • Curriculum materials. • Teachers for summer programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveys • Agendas • Notes • Evaluations • Tutor logs • Individual Needs Assessments • Learning plans • Assessment results
1.4) Collaborate with schools to ensure migratory students receive supplemental English language instruction and/or home language development appropriate to their needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tutors • Meetings with LEAs or programs. • Provide MEP overviews. • Advocacy • Participate in 504 meetings. • Meetings with migrant liaisons. • Virtual tutoring. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff time • Materials to assist with access such as hot spots. • Transportation after tutoring. • MOUs with schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveys • Agendas • Notes • Evaluations • Tutor logs • MOUs • Communication logs

Area 2: School Readiness

Strategy	Examples of strategy implementation	Use of MEP funds	Information sites should keep about strategy implementation
2.1) Establish agreements and/or coordinate with Early Head Start and similar early childhood program providers to facilitate access to preschool learning experiences for migratory children that will lead to kindergarten readiness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bi-annual meetings with partner agencies providing educational services for migratory children. • Support for registration including transportation, interpretation, and advocacy. • Agreements to share referrals. • Preschool transition assistance for parents and children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interventionists, liaisons, advocates • Meetings with preschool service providers. • Supplemental educational materials. • Transportation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreements with Early Childhood Education providers. • Attendance or enrollment records. • Communication logs • Meeting notes • Parent meeting agendas.
2.2) Provide migratory preschoolers with age-appropriate, developmentally appropriate, and culturally inclusive summer instruction. Provide reading materials in their homes during the regular school year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct instruction (site-based) • Direct instruction (home-based) • Provide reading materials for the home during the school year. • Enrichment and field trips. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers and aides • Local PD • Early math resources; e.g., manipulatives and access to technology. • Field trip expenses. • Reading materials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance records • MEP Early Childhood Education Assessment

Strategy	Examples of strategy implementation	Use of MEP funds	Information sites should keep about strategy implementation
2.3) Provide parent activities to disseminate information about preschool learning opportunities and include user-friendly (easy to read, colorful, well-labeled, simplified) resource manuals listing instructional and related supports. Ensure that information is distributed in the parents' home language and in a manner accessible to parents including technology such as WhatsApp.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer large and small group parent workshops and Parent Advisory Council meetings. • Home visitor protocol for effective parent interactions. • Bi-annual meetings with partner agencies providing educational services for migratory children. • Use technology to create instructional videos for parents that model instructional strategies. • Use the MEP website to compile/share parent resources. • Create a listing of preschool/early childhood programs for MEP team awareness and distribute to parents/guardians (based upon geographic proximity to where they reside). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers and aides • Local PD • Educational materials and supplies • Parent workshop expenses • Flash drives, SD cards, etc. loaded with instructional resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sign-in sheets. • Workshop agendas • Parent evaluations • Collaboration meeting records and notes

Area 3: High School Graduation and Out of School Youth Achievement

Strategy	Examples of strategy implementation	Use of MEP funds	Information sites should keep about strategy implementation
3.1) During the school year, provide supplemental tutoring in reading and math with English language support appropriate for secondary student needs and aligned with their Individual Needs Assessment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-school tutoring • After-school or weekend tutoring • Virtual or remote tutoring • Computer-assisted learning • Needs assessment with review of assessment results and discussions with teachers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff training • Staff time • Equipment and connectivity support. • Instructional materials • Software or licenses for learning platforms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual Needs Assessments • Writing rubrics • Tutoring logs • Learning plans

Strategy	Examples of strategy implementation	Use of MEP funds	Information sites should keep about strategy implementation
3.2) Provide instructional support during the summer through site-based summer school, virtual instruction, or home-based instruction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High school equivalency, motivational strategies • Enrichment and engagement activities • Site-based summer program • Curriculum materials • Middle school course • High school credit accrual • Academic skill building • Assessment preparation • Post-secondary preparation • Career awareness • Life skills • STEAM • Access to school library resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff training • Staff time • Credit accrual cost. • College visits/enrichment and engagement activities. • Field trip expenses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre and post tests • Individual Needs Assessments • Learning plans • Interest inventories • Credit accrual forms. • Student surveys • Agendas • Student participation (attendance)
3.3) Provide information and facilitate access to vocational, career readiness, and college programs as appropriate for student needs and interest.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-school visits with students. • Monitoring progress on credit accrual. • Coordination with high school counselors and teachers to ensure migratory students have the opportunity to visit with college recruiters. • Needs and interest inventories. • Support for scholarship and other financial support applications. • Support for college applications. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff time • Materials for needs and interest inventories. • Transportation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual Needs Assessments • Interest inventories • Logs and progress monitoring • Student participation in college visits. • Communication logs • Tutor logs

Strategy	Examples of strategy implementation	Use of MEP funds	Information sites should keep about strategy implementation
3.4) Provide English language and life skills instruction for out-of-school youth focused on language and skills needed in the community, the youth's chosen career path, or educational goals, as well as referrals to agencies that provide services listed above. Ensure access to instruction through transportation, mobile tutors, technology, and other supports appropriate for out-of-school youth needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic skill building • Bilingual support/Multilingual Instruction (mini-English lessons) • Life skills instruction • Motivational strategies • Enrichment and engagement activities • OSYmigrant.org lessons • Learning plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff training • Staff time • Enrichment and engagement activities • Materials, books, technology, etc. • Transportation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre- and post-tests • English Language Screeners • Life skill lessons • OSYmigrant.org lesson assessments • Student surveys • Individual Needs Assessments • Learning plans • Agendas • Student participation (attendance)

Area 4: Support Services Project

Strategy	Examples of strategy implementation	Use of MEP funds	Information sites should keep about strategy implementation
4.1) Provide reading and math materials for migratory children, including bilingual books, math activities, technology tools and assistance, and other learning tools as appropriate for the child's needs and levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referrals services fair. • Partnership with local service providers. • Family workshop to disseminate information and provide enrollment/application support. • Referrals and agreements for sharing referral information. • Distribution of necessary instructional supplies. • Review supply lists for schools in which students are enrolled and provide assistance for obtaining supplies. • Partnerships with local public libraries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calendar of services • Staff time • Distribution costs • Informational materials • Family event costs • Books, instructional materials • Technology, devices, connectivity support • Books, including school library resources and instructional materials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs assessments • Agendas • Notes • Evaluations • Distribution logs • Supply lists from students' schools/teachers

Strategy	Examples of strategy implementation	Use of MEP funds	Information sites should keep about strategy implementation
4.2) Coordinate with health services providers to facilitate access to vision, dental, medical, and mental health care aligned to children's needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information/pamphlets on local health centers in the community and coordinate with service providers to facilitate family and out-of-school youth access to care. • Family events with wellness components. • Nutrition • Immunization records and referrals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dental and health screenings. • Supplemental nutrition costs. • Advocacy and coordination with services providers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs assessments • Agendas • Notes • Family participation records • Parent surveys
4.3) Provide parents and family members with opportunities for training, resources, activities/ events that increase their skills for supporting their children's learning in the home (e.g., school communication classes for parents, math games/activities, literacy/math nights).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home visits • Materials and school supplies • Parent meetings • Parent workshops • School staff meetings • Parent liaisons • Follow up for request. • Multiple methods of parent communication (online, flyers, calls, etc.). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff time • Educational materials and school supplies • Family event costs • Collaboration with partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sign-in sheets • Parent surveys • Agendas • Notes • Evaluations • Fiscal records • Needs and services summary and log.

Joint Planning and Integration of Services

The NJDOE's MEP coordinator is housed in the Office of Supplemental Educational Programs, which also houses staff responsible for the implementation of Title I, Part A, Title III, Part A, and the Education for Homeless Children and Youth. Through weekly formal staff meetings and informal conversations, the MEP coordinator collaborates on policy development, program development, and program implementation to address the needs of migrant students who are multilingual learners. To further formalize joint planning, the Office of Supplemental Educational Programs, annually designates a staff member from the regional LOAs to serve as an ex-officio member of the State's Bilingual Advisory Committee, which is authorized under New Jersey's Administrative Code (N.J.A.C.).

To further support the needs of migratory children, the NJDOE's Title I, Part C MEP jointly plans among local, state, and federal education programs, including LIEPs under Title III, Part A and plans the integration of services available under Title I, Part C with services provided by other programs, including McKinney-Vento. It should be noted that while migratory students are not categorically eligible for McKinney-Vento services, migratory students living in a primary nighttime residence that is not fixed, regular, and adequate are eligible. Additionally, the NJDOE's Advisory Committee for Federally Funded Programs (ACFFP) provides input about planning for MEPs and includes a representative awarded LOAs. This ensures collaboration and interaction with Title I, Part A.

New Jersey's MEP coordinator is also a member of the New Jersey Council for Young Children (NJCYC.) NJCYC was created by a 2010 executive order and serves as a "state advisory council for early care and education as authorized in the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007." The inclusion of the MEP coordinator ensures the NJCYC is aware of and considers the needs of migrant preschool children in its advice to the governor. The MEP coordinator in turn, can incorporate the work of the NJCYC into the NJDOE's MEP.

In addition, the NJDOE implements joint planning among local, state, and federal education programs through its monitoring of the State's awarded LOAs. The projects must implement designated programs and strategies in collaboration with LEAs that enroll migrant students, social service agencies, and health care providers. Specifically, the awarded LOAs' projects must include LEA personnel in the planning and operation of the MEP and disseminate information on the educational needs of migrant children to designated LEA personnel such as school nurses, school counselors, and federal program administrators. Further, awarded LOAs' projects must develop articulation agreements with supplemental instructional programs (e.g., Title I, Title III, and 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLCs), where applicable) to maximize migrant students' access to needed educational services.

Addressing the Needs of Preschool Migratory Children

The NJDOE addresses the unique needs of preschool migratory children as articulated in its MEP Service Delivery Plan and through activities implemented by its awarded LOAs. To meet New Jersey's MEP goal of closing gaps in preschool learning experiences and language development for migrant students, each project is required to:

- Establish procedures to identify and recruit eligible preschool-aged migrant children residing in the geographic boundaries of the project for enrollment in school and supplemental instructional opportunities;

- Provide instructional services, health, and other supportive services for eligible preschool migrant children in the summer term instructional program;
- Include eligible preschool migrant children in the summer term instructional program to improve their school readiness skills;
- Provide early childhood education with a focus on home and/or English language development in migrant summer schools;
- Assist parents with registration in early childhood education programs; and
- Negotiate formal agreements with early childhood education providers to reserve places for migrant children.

Additionally, the NJDOE's MEP Service Delivery Plan outlines specific goals, measurable objectives, and strategies to meet the unique needs of preschool migratory children identified in the latest Statewide comprehensive needs assessment (see Area #2 above for details).

Addressing the Needs of Migratory Children Who Have Dropped Out of School

To address the unique needs of migratory children who have dropped out of school, New Jersey's awarded LOAs projects implement activities to meet the Statewide goal of increasing access to instruction for out-of-school youth to improve their basic life skills. Specifically, each project must provide information and instruction for out-of-school youth on community services, eligibility for services, and ways in which to access services.

Additionally, the NJDOE's MEP Service Delivery Plan outlines specific goals, measurable objectives, and strategies to meet the unique needs of migratory children who have dropped out of school that were identified in the latest Statewide comprehensive needs assessment (see Area #3 above for details).

Evaluation of Title I, Part C Program

The evaluation of the New Jersey MEP is completed by the NJDOE with the assistance of an external evaluator who is knowledgeable about migrant education, evaluation design, federal reporting requirements and Office of Migrant Education guidelines, the State context, and the operation of the New Jersey MEP. The evaluation systematically collects information to improve the program and to help the State make decisions about program improvement and success.

The evaluation reports both implementation and outcome data to determine the extent to which the MPOs for the MEP in ELA, mathematics, school readiness, high school graduation, out-of-school youth achievement, and support services have been addressed and met.

Data on migratory children and services are collected by the State from each of its LOAs. Data sources include migratory parents, recruiters, migrant program administrators, and other staff as appropriate. In addition, the State works with the MEP evaluator to develop a Fidelity of Strategy Implementation rubric to rate the extent to which local implementation of strategies aligns with the strategy descriptions in the Service Delivery Plan. LOAs use the form to document methods of strategy implementation and evidence maintained locally regarding participation. Each project completes the Fidelity of Strategy Implementation at least once each year.

Information used to complete the Fidelity of Strategy Implementation includes data from surveys, focus groups, structured interviews, and record reviews (including assessment results reported through the State data collection and reporting system). Once annual projects have concluded, data analysis procedures include descriptive statistics based on New Jersey migratory child demographics, program implementation, and student and program outcomes. Means and frequencies are calculated, tests of statistical significance are then completed, and trend analyses are conducted on open-ended responses from stakeholders.

To comply with federal guidelines, the New Jersey MEP's annual performance results evaluation also informs state educational agency (SEA) decision-making. The evaluation includes performance results data on State performance targets related to Performance Goals 1–4, any additional performance targets identified by the State, MEP Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) indicators, and the MEP MPOs; implementation results; and implications and recommendations for improvement of services based upon implementation results and performance results data.

System of Identification and Recruitment

The ID&R Manual is a working document; i.e., updates and additions are ongoing to meet the ever-changing needs of the NJ MEP. The NJDOE will continue to review data and gather stakeholder input for future updates. Additionally, the State coordinator, in collaboration with LOA directors, will review the ID&R guidance annually to guide in the planning, implementation, and execution of a conceived and driven ID&R Service Delivery Plan.

For the proper identification and recruitment of eligible migratory children, the NJDOE provides written guidance on eligibility to each LOA, which is reviewed annually and reinforced during regional and statewide MEP training. The NJDOE's system of monitoring includes conducting annual audits of Certificates of Eligibility and migrant lists for review of eligibility determinations.

[end NJDOE response]

2. Promote Coordination of Services (ESEA section 1304(b)(3))

Describe how the State will use Title I, Part C funds received under this part 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.

[begin NJDOE response]

Educational Continuity

The NJDOE promotes educational continuity, including the timely transfer of pertinent school records, and health information when children move from one school to another whether the move occurs during the regular school year or summer/intersession period through its LOA MEP Projects. The NJDOE Record Keeping and Reporting Manual highlights a written and systematic approach to record-keeping (data collection), reporting, and records exchange based on the proper adoption of policies and procedures that lead to effective internal analysis along with execution of inter/intrastate transfer of migrant student records. Additionally, staff receive annual professional development/training on the software New Jersey uses to track migrant student data for upload into the Migrant Student Information Exchange, and technical assistance as needed, to update and maintain their knowledge of the data maintenance requirements.

Through the review of interim and final reports submitted by its LOA MEP Projects, the NJDOE monitors the transfer of student records, monthly, and other information about migrant children on an interstate and intrastate basis and ensures each MEP Project's full participation in the migrant student record transfer system.

Intrastate Transfer

The NJDOE and its LOAs' regional MEPs, promote interstate and intrastate coordination of services for migratory children by allocating Title I, Part C funds to support participation in the Migrant Student Information Exchange and purchase hardware/software to support corresponding technology needs. The NJDOE's MEP Student Record-Keeping and Reporting Manual provides a systematic approach to record-keeping and reporting of migrant student information. In addition to providing an overview of the NJDOE MEP Data tools (e.g., Migrant Student Information Exchange), the manual also includes the process for the timely collection, uploading, and data entry of all Minimum Data Elements. The Course History Record-Keeping procedure ensures any new or changed information (e.g. when a student moves from one region to another within New Jersey) is uploaded to the Migrant Student Information Exchange within the required regulatory timeframe.

[end NJDOE response]

3. Use of Funds (ESEA section 1304(b)(4))

Describe the State's priorities for the use of Title I, Part C funds, and how such priorities relate to the State's assessment of needs for services in the State.

[begin NJDOE response]

Based on New Jersey's comprehensive needs assessment and associated strategies to support the needs of migratory students outlined above, spending priorities fall into the five main categories outlined below. These spending priorities are relayed annually to LOAs to ensure alignment with the needs identified by the NJDOE. Note that New Jersey regularly updates its needs assessment as part of its continuous improvement process and, as a result, makes periodic adjustments to the use of funds accordingly. The most recent details on spending priorities can always be found in the latest Statewide comprehensive needs assessment on the [New Jersey Migrant Education Program](#) page.

1. Tutoring and supplemental instruction, including the school year and the summer;
2. Educational materials and technology;
3. Health screenings (vision, dental, medical, mental health);
4. Activities to increase parent involvement; and
5. Supports for College and Career Readiness.

In addition to providing LOAs with its spending priorities, the NJDOE works with LOAs to identify and prioritize support for the unmet needs of students who have been identified as "priority for services" before serving other migrant children. Full definitions of those students who qualify can be found in the Statewide comprehensive needs assessment including Students with Interrupted Formal Education and other priority populations. LOAs must create an Individual Needs Assessment for each migrant student served and while the NJDOE provides guidance on priorities, ultimately the individual needs of a student serve as the top spending priority.

[end NJDOE response]

C. Title I, Part D: Prevention and Intervention Programs for Children and Youth who are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk

[begin NJDOE response]

Overview

Title I, Part D has two subparts, one providing State-level funding, and the other providing funds to LEAs to support youth defined as neglected, delinquent, or at-risk. State agencies and LEAs that conduct Title I, Part D programs are required to:

- Improve educational services for children and youth in local and state institutions so the students can meet the challenging State academic standards that all students in the State are expected to meet;
- Provide children and youth returning from local and state institutions and correctional facilities with the services needed to make a successful transition back to school or employment; and
- Prevent at-risk youth from dropping out of school and provide dropouts and children and youth returning from correctional facilities or neglected and delinquent facilities with a support system to ensure their continued education and the involvement of their families and communities.

[end NJDOE response]

1. Transitions Between Correctional Facilities and Local Programs (ESEA section 1414(a)(1)(B))

Provide a plan for assisting in the transition of children and youth between correctional facilities and locally operated programs.

[begin NJDOE response]

Answers to Title I, Part D are included in the summary below the next section (2. Program Objectives and Outcomes).

[end NJDOE response]

2. Program Objectives and Outcomes (ESEA section 1414(a)(2)(A))

Describe the program objectives and outcomes established by the State that will be used to assess the effectiveness of the Title I, Part D program in improving the academic, career, and technical skills of children in the program.

[begin NJDOE response]

New Jersey is awarded funds under Title I, Part D through a formula grant based on the number of children in state-operated institutions and per-pupil educational expenditures. Each state's allocation is generated by the count of children and youth in state juvenile institutions that provide at least 20 hours of instruction from non-federal funds and adult correctional institutions that provide 15 hours of instruction a week. New Jersey then makes subgrants (Title I, Part D, Subpart 1) to state agencies based on their proportional share of the state's adjusted enrollment count of neglected or delinquent children and youth. Under local agency programs (Title I, Part D, Subpart 2), the NJDOE awards subgrants to LEAs with high numbers or percentages of children and youth in locally operated juvenile correctional facilities, including facilities involved in community day programs.

State agencies (Department of Corrections, Department of Children and Families, and the Juvenile Justice Commission) and LEAs that conduct Title I, Part D programs are required to:

- Improve educational services for children and youth in local and state institutions so the students can meet the challenging State academic standards that all students in the State are expected to meet;
- Provide children and youth returning from local and state institutions with the services needed to transition back to school or employment successfully; and
- Prevent at-risk youth from dropping out of school and provide dropouts and children and youth returning from local and state institutions with a support system to ensure their continued education and the involvement of their families and communities.

Through the approval and monitoring of the required state agency and LEA program plans, as well as State regulations that ensure each student's LEA of residence is provided with timely communication of student progress, the NJDOE is positioned to assist institutions and facilities in improving the quality of educational services based on an individual student's specific needs, thus providing eligible students with the same opportunities for academic success as their peers in traditional public schools. Under Title I, Part D, Subpart 1, programs, projects, and activities include academic instruction in reading, mathematics, ELA, and career and technical education. Under Title I, Part D, Subpart 2, funds can be used to support high-quality education programs that prepare children and youth to complete high school, enter training or employment programs, or further their education; implement activities that facilitate the transition of children and youth from a correctional program to an institution to further education or employment; and operate dropout prevention programs in local schools. Also permitted under Title I, Part D, Subpart 2 is the coordination of health and social services for at-risk children and youth; special programs that meet the unique academic needs of at-risk children and youth, including career and technical education, special

education, career counseling, curriculum-based entrepreneurship education, and assistance in securing student loans or grants for post-secondary education; and programs providing mentoring and peer mediation.

New Jersey provides resources and opportunities for technical assistance to support state agencies and LEAs in meeting the needs of neglected, delinquent, and at-risk youth on an ongoing basis through direct response to inquiries and with the support of the Neglected and Delinquent Technical Assistance Center, which is supported by the USED. The Neglected and Delinquent Technical Assistance Center serves as a national resource center to provide direct assistance to states, schools, communities, and parents seeking information on the education of neglected, delinquent, or at-risk children and youth. Other resources are also shared with state agencies, as appropriate. Additionally, the NJDOE is poised to assist agencies in improving conditions for learning through school climate initiatives (e.g., social and emotional learning, restorative justice) and the New Jersey Tiered System of Supports (NJTSS).

To assist in the transition of children and youth from locally operated programs to correctional facilities, the NJDOE has promulgated rules through N.J.A.C. 6A:17-3, Educational Programs for Students in State Facilities to “develop an individualized program plan, within 30 calendar days, for each general education student, in consultation with the student’s parent, LEA of residence, and a team of professionals with knowledge of the student’s educational, behavioral, emotional, social, and health needs to identify appropriate instructional and support services.” The individualized program plan must include information on the student’s current mastery of academic standards, requirements still needed to graduate in the student’s LEA of residence, and the services needed to facilitate re-entry upon completion.

To assist in the transition of children and youth between correctional facilities and locally operated programs and to ensure timely re-enrollment and the transfer of credits that students earn during placement, the NJDOE has promulgated rules at N.J.A.C. 6A:17-3 that apply to all educational programs provided by the Department of Corrections, Department of Children and Families, and the Juvenile Justice Commission for general education students aged 5 through 20 and for students with disabilities aged 3 through 21 who do not hold a high school diploma.

For all students, each state agency must transfer educational records and a final progress report for each student exiting a state facility to the LEA identified upon discharge within ten school days of the student’s exit.

The NJDOE also promulgated rules at N.J.A.C. 6A:14-8, Programs Operated by the Departments of Corrections, Children and Families and Human Services, and the Juvenile Justice Commission for students with disabilities. When the student enters the facility, this State regulation requires that the state agency provides a program comparable to the special education program in the student’s current IEP and subsequently implement the current IEP or develop a new IEP. N.J.A.C. 6A:14-8 also requires the transfer of mandated student records and facilitation of a student’s entry into the LEA of residence, as appropriate.

The NJDOE developed guidance for LEAs on best practices for the necessary services and support to help students transition to state facilities and make a timely re-enrollment and successful transition back to school.

Figure C.1: New Jersey's program objectives, outcomes, and timeframes

Objective	Outcome	Timeframe
Ensuring state agencies and LEAs set performance goals.	Measurement to monitor the progress of all students in meeting challenging State academic standards and accountability performance goals.	Annually
Ensuring ongoing, collaborative discussions with state agencies and LEAs to determine their needs.	Provide appropriate professional development, technical assistance, and/or resources.	Quarterly
Ensure that state agencies and LEAs increase the number of students with high school diplomas who transition to post-secondary education, job training, or employment within 90 days of exit.	Increase the percentage of students with a high school diploma or equivalent who successfully transition to post-secondary education, job training, or employment.	Assess not less than once every 3 years (ESSA, Section 1431).
Ensuring state agencies and LEAs increase the number of students attaining a high school diploma before exit.	Increase the percentage of students attaining a high school diploma, or equivalent, before exit.	Assess not less than once every 3 years (ESSA, Section 1431).
Ensuring state agencies and LEAs increase the number of students transitioning to post-secondary education, job training, or employment.	Increase the percentage of students transitioning to post-secondary education, job training, or employment.	Assess not less than once every 3 years (ESSA, Section 1431).

[end NJDOE response]

D. Title II, Part A: Supporting Effective Instruction

[begin NJDOE response]

Introduction

The NJDOE's role is to provide support and free professional learning opportunities for all educators to help them support all students, particularly those with diverse learning needs. This section describes how the NJDOE will work to enhance key initiatives related to diversifying the educator workforce and promoting educator's skills in elementary mathematics and early literacy. However, the activities and systems are not exhaustive.

[end NJDOE response]

1. Use of Funds (ESEA section 2101(d)(2)(A) and (D))

Describe how the State educational agency will use Title II, Part A funds received under Title II, Part A for State-level activities described in section 2101(c), including how the activities are expected to improve student achievement.

[begin NJDOE response]

Title II, Part A funds can contribute to improved academic achievement, teacher quality, and student outcomes in a variety of ways. First, these funds will allow the NJDOE to continue outreach to higher education educator preparation programs to provide professional learning series, ensuring that pre-service teachers have a thorough understanding of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS). Additionally, such funds will support New Jersey's "Diversify the Educator Workforce" initiatives described in section D2 below.

Second, funds to support professional learning for both pre- and in-service teachers will allow the NJDOE to create specific opportunities to assist educators in implementing the NJSLS across all nine content areas. The NJDOE has primarily focused funds on providing high-quality instruction and instructional leadership in STEM areas, including science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. For science instruction, the OpenSciEd project engages LEA teams of instructional leaders and educators to field-test and revise open-sourced NJSLS science-based instructional materials. The program features ongoing professional learning and methods instructional leaders use to support their LEA's educators in creating the conditions necessary to implement the instructional units with fidelity.

The mathematics-based Data Literacy Project is focused on developing resources for data literacy aligned to the NJSLS-Mathematics. The guidance and resources developed through the project are essential for informing professional development on a variety of topics, including the use of technology tools that support data literacy, clarification of NJSLS performance expectations, introduction of effective

pedagogical supports for educators and leaders, as well as the provision of standards-aligned sample tasks for students.

To support LEAs in the successful implementation of the New Jersey Birth to 3 Early Learning Standards (B-3 Standards) and Preschool Standards, and the NJSLS-kindergarten through grade 3, as well as best practices, the NJDOE's Division of Early Childhood Services provides extensive technical assistance and professional development for LEA-level preschool administrators with state-funded preschool programs, are invited to attend regional professional learning sessions throughout the school year. Instructional coaches from state-funded preschool programs receive training in two cohorts: one geared toward novice coaches and the other geared toward veteran coaches. Training is differentiated for coaches' experience levels, with the expectation that information is then turn-keyed back to teachers in both LEA- and private provider-operated preschool classrooms (including Head Start programs). Similarly, kindergarten through grade 3 teachers, instructional coaches, and administrators are offered professional development sessions focused on developmentally appropriate, research-based best practices from the Office of K-3 Education. The Division of Early Childhood Services works with other state agencies, higher education institutions, and professional organizations as partners to train early childhood providers in the implementation of the B-3 Standards, the Preschool Standards, and administrative codes and statutes.

Finally, the NJDOE will continue its professional learning series for educators and administrators. Ongoing professional development in these areas will impact student achievement: addressing the NJSLS in each subject area, supporting LEA leadership in implementing the NJSLS, and providing training for LEAs in identifying and supporting gifted and talented students. Using Title II, Part A funds will allow the NJDOE to continue creating resources for the field that enhance instruction in the NJSLS.

[end NJDOE response]

2. Use of Funds to Improve Equitable Access to Teachers in Title I, Part A Schools (ESEA section 2101(d)(2)(E))

If an SEA plans to use Title II, Part A funds to improve equitable access to effective teachers, consistent with ESEA section 1111(g)(1)(B), describe how such funds will be used for these purposes.

[begin NJDOE response]

The NJDOE is committed to increasing student access to high-quality educators of diverse backgrounds, increasing awareness and promoting positive messaging about the teaching profession, and providing more effective and efficient resources for those hiring and retaining prospective and current educators. The Diversifying the Teacher Workforce initiatives in the NJDOE provide all New Jersey students access to a teacher workforce that reflects the ethno-racial diversity of the State's population. The NJDOE partners with education preparation program providers, county colleges, LEAs, professional associations, and community-rooted organizations to share and implement promising recruitment, preparation, and retention strategies and integrate culturally responsive practices into these efforts. To support this the NJDOE has several initiatives including:

- The Minority Teacher Development grant provides funding to eligible organizations that recruit, train, and place new teachers, with a special emphasis on minority teachers. The purpose of the Minority Teacher Quality and Retention grant is to provide funding to an eligible organization to establish a sustainable program of instructional coaching.
- The K–12 Workforce Diversity program is designed to support men of color who wish to enter the teaching profession through an alternative certification program.
- The Diverse Learner-Ready Teacher committee meets monthly and is committed to increasing ethno-racial diversity of the teacher workforce and ensuring all educators engage in culturally responsive practices. The committee includes representation from the NJDOE, educator preparation programs, educational organizations, and school and LEA-level administration.
- Since 2018, the NJDOE has partnered with the New Jersey Association for Colleges of Teacher Education in annual convenings designed to raise awareness of teacher diversity and to offer solutions to diversify the educator workforce.

[end NJDOE response]

3. System of Certification and Licensing (ESEA section 2101(d)(2)(B))

Describe the State’s system of certification and licensing of teachers, principals, or other school leaders.

[begin NJDOE response]

The NJDOE is committed to ensuring all students are served by effective and appropriately certified educators. To support the achievement of this goal, the NJDOE utilizes the New Jersey Certification (NJEdCert) system, a fully automated application for educators to access applications and current certifications. As signaled in the 2017 ESSA State Plan, the previous teacher certification information system was antiquated and cumbersome to use. The new NJEdCert system represented a multi-year effort designed to expeditiously process certification applications to ensure effective and appropriately certified teachers quickly make their way into the classroom. For example, educator preparation programs can nominate candidates who have completed an NJDOE-approved educator preparation program, which expedites the certification process of those candidates.

LEAs can also access candidate files through NJEdCert to determine the status of their candidate’s certification. Since July 1, 2023, approximately 51,000 applications have been processed through this system, in part due to the certification fee holiday, which was in place from July 2023 through June 2024.

[end NJDOE response]

4. Improving Skills of Educators (ESEA section 2101(d)(2)(J))

Describe how the SEA will improve the skills of teachers, principals, or other school leaders in order to enable them to identify students with specific learning needs, particularly children with disabilities, English learners, students who are gifted and talented, and students with low literacy levels, and provide instruction based on the needs of such students.

[begin NJDOE response]

The NJDOE remains focused on helping pre-service and in-service educators continually improve their skills, particularly when supporting students with diverse learning needs.

Example Regulatory Updates Since 2024

The New Jersey State Board of Education adopted revised certification, mentorship, educator preparation, and Bilingual Education regulations. These changes were designed to ensure preparation programs and LEAs are providing educators with the preparation and support they need to teach diverse learners.

The regulatory changes related to teacher preparation included a heavy emphasis on ensuring that educator preparation programs instruct their pre-service teachers in pedagogy coursework and/or clinical experiences for all candidates for the preschool through grade three endorsement. Examples of changes the State Board of Education adopted in May 2023 are listed below.

Preparation programs must, for certain content or grade level areas:

- Require candidates to have six to nine credits that focus on developing the pedagogical content knowledge for teaching mathematics to preschool and elementary students;
- Require candidates to complete 12 to 15 credits that focus on developing the pedagogical content knowledge for teaching reading and literacy to preschool and elementary students and that include developing the pedagogical content knowledge and conceptual framework for teaching early literacy skills or foundational reading skills, including, but not limited to:
 - phonics,
 - phonemic awareness,
 - vocabulary,
 - reading comprehension,
 - fluency, and
 - concepts of print;
- Include in its teacher preparation curricula, strategies for:
 - teaching reading comprehension, writing, speaking, and listening to preschool and elementary students;

- multicultural, multilingual, and diverse children’s literature;
- assessment for, and planning of, remedial instruction to address reading problems for early and emergent readers, and
- assessment and screening of early reading difficulties; and foundations of speech-language development, including screening and support of students with speech/language, articulation, and communication disorders.

Also, in the May 2023 regulatory process, the State Board of Education adopted a new certification focused on supporting early literacy in preschool through grade 3. The early literacy specialist endorsement requires a deep understanding of the foundational support necessary to serve students in preschool through grade 3. The introduction of a new educational services endorsement specific to meeting the literacy development needs of young readers aligns with the NJDOE’s goals to create opportunities for all students to be reading at or above grade level by grade 3. The holder of an early literacy specialist endorsement may serve as the primary general education interventionist for any student in preschool through grade three with a reading or literacy difficulty that is the result of dyslexia or dysgraphia and advanced literacy strategies for supporting students with varying abilities and multilingual learners.

Educator preparation programs must include instruction focused on special education pedagogy for initial instructional certification. Programs that train educators specifically for the teacher of students with disabilities certificate shall include coursework on autism spectrum disorder. Additionally, every initial instructional program shall include training on culturally responsive/sustaining pedagogies and training on supporting multilingual learners.

Additional Instructional Supports for Diverse Learners

To enhance the skills of educators as they support diverse learners, the NJDOE provides regular and sustained professional development to teachers, educational services providers, principals, and other school leaders. Staff from multiple NJDOE offices regularly provide professional learning experiences on various topics. Such opportunities include regular sessions held by content coordinators to target training and professional learning offerings focusing on specific populations. Additionally, the NJDOE staff and partners regularly lead sessions on differentiated instruction, assistive technologies, scaffolded instruction, acceleration options, and literacy interventions that can impact children with disabilities and/or multilingual learners, identification of students who are gifted and talented, and support for students with low literacy levels.

Additional professional learning opportunities include support in analyzing and exploring the NJSLs across all content areas and content-specific pedagogy. The NJDOE will also invest in developing educator and practitioner-focused guidance documents and materials to support NJSLs implementation.

Examples of additional professional learning support for students with specific learning needs include:

Students with Special Needs

The Office of Special Education provides professional development, technical assistance, coaching, and resources to educators, families, and other stakeholders across the State to improve outcomes for students with disabilities ages 3 through 21. The office oversees four Learning Resource Centers strategically placed across the State to provide families of students with disabilities and educational professionals with information, materials, technical assistance, and consultation regarding policies, laws and regulations, and best practices in special education. The office is engaged in partnerships with state universities and organizations offering school-based professional learning opportunities with a focus on those practices that promote self-advocacy, preparation for post-secondary education and competitive employment, and inclusion of students with disabilities in all school and community environments.

Gifted and Talented

Moreover, The Division of Teaching and Learning Services, Office of Standards conducts an extensive review of Gifted and Talented Service Reports. Based on data analyses from these reports, the Office of Standards responds appropriately to support LEAs in implementing the Strengthening Gifted and Talented Education Act. In collaboration with the Strengthening Gifted and Talented Education Advisory Committee, the NJDOE provides resources and technical assistance in identifying kindergarten through grade 12 students for gifted and talented services. The Office of Standards provides professional learning on gifted education for educators and administrators, which includes an overview of gifted education, an exploration of strategies and approaches to ensure equitable access to programs, and guidance for high-quality programs.

Multilingual Learners

In collaboration with the Mid-Atlantic Equity Assistance Consortium and WestEd, the NJDOE hosted a series of six webinars for LEA teams of teachers and administrators on the topic of “Multilingual Learners with Disabilities.” Example sessions include “Distinguishing between language acquisition and learning disability,” “Implementing Evidence-Based Practices: Universal Design for Learning,” and “Culturally Responsive Special Educational Evaluation.”

Literacy

In service to all students, particularly those not reading and writing at grade level, the NJDOE has developed and implemented two statewide professional learning initiatives designed to support and bolster evidence-based literacy instruction in kindergarten through grade 6. These evidence-based initiatives are tightly aligned with the knowledge and skills featured within the revisions to the NJSLS for ELA, adopted in early October 2023 by the New Jersey State Board of Education, and are responsive to data derived from the New Jersey Student Learning Assessments. The Reading Acceleration Professionally Integrated Development (RAPID) Initiative provides educators with free professional learning and tools to support foundational literacy for kindergarten through grade 3 students. The complimentary RAPID Plus Initiative provides educators with free professional learning and tools to support developing readers in upper elementary grades (grades 4 through 6). School leaders and administrators have a separate series that focuses on designing and supporting high-quality literacy instruction in schools. Both the RAPID and RAPID Plus series will be made available to LEAs in perpetuity by publishing asynchronous training modules on the NJDOE’s website.

[end NJDOE response]

5. Data and Consultation (ESEA section 2101(d)(2)(K))

Describe how the State will use data and ongoing consultation as described in ESEA section 2101(d)(3) to continually update and improve the activities supported under Title II, Part A.

[begin NJDOE response]

The NJDOE is studying the effects of the Minority Grant programs as described in response 2 above. External evaluators are assisting NJDOE to help determine how to improve support. Additionally, the NJEdCert system can generate data on applicants to help the NJDOE understand the diversity of the teachers entering the workforce and the areas of teaching that candidates are choosing to inform the NJDOE about decision-making activities and support. The NJDOE has also partnered with the Mid-Atlantic Comprehensive Center to conduct research and collect data related to recruitment and retention practices at education preparation programs in the State and assemble a recruitment best practices toolkit.

The OpenSciEd project described in Section B1 above was initiated in New Jersey due to early findings from the New Jersey Student Learning Assessment operational field test. After the 2019 administration, and in preparation for the assessment results to be used by the NJDOE for LEA accountability through the Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC) in 2022, The Office of Standards identified a project that could help LEAs improve their science programs. The OpenSciEd project will continue to provide LEAs with access to high quality, open-sourced curriculum and aligned professional learning that strongly supports the implementation of the NJSLS-Science. The statewide science assessment results are used to inform the next steps of the project.

[end NJDOE response]

6. Teacher Preparation (ESEA section 2101(d)(2)(M))

Describe the actions the State may take to improve preparation programs and strengthen support for teachers, principals, or other school leaders based on the needs of the State, as identified by the SEA.

[begin NJDOE response]

Ensuring educator candidates are trained to positively impact student learning the moment they enter the classroom has been, and will continue to be, a major priority of NJDOE. To provide meaningful, transparent data to assist aspiring teachers in better selecting the preparation program that suits their needs and to assist educator preparation providers in meeting the needs of aspiring teachers, NJDOE created [New Jersey Performance Reports for Educator Preparation](#) in 2014. As described in the 2017 ESSA State Plan, the NJDOE successfully enhanced the reports to ensure prospective candidates, accredited preparation program providers, and LEA recruiters can use the reports more effectively.

In addition to the regulatory updates to educator preparation requirements that are listed above, in 2023, State rules about professional development, including mentoring, were updated. One key change included New Jersey strengthening its mentoring programs by requiring more frequent communication between mentors and new teachers. Weekly, in-person contact time for a minimum of 30 weeks is now required. This was previously unspecified. This is to be followed up with guidance and training.

[end NJDOE response]

E. Title III, Part A, Subpart 1: English Language Acquisition and Language Enhancement

[begin NJDOE response]

Overview

Title III, Part A provides funds to help multilingual learners, including immigrant children and youth, succeed in school by assisting them in becoming fluent in English and meeting challenging State academic content and student academic achievement standards.

The federal priorities of Title III are to:

- Increase the English language proficiency of multilingual learners by providing effective LIEPs that meet the needs of multilingual learners and increase English language proficiency and student academic achievement;
- Provide effective professional development designed to improve the instruction and assessment of multilingual learners, to enhance the ability of teachers and school leaders to understand and implement curricula and assessment practices and measures, and to increase children's English language proficiency or substantially increase the subject matter knowledge, teaching knowledge, and teaching skills of teachers; and
- Provide and implement other effective activities and strategies that enhance or supplement LIEPs for multilingual learners which shall include parent, family, and community engagement activities.

LEAs receiving Title III funds receive comprehensive support afforded to all recipients of ESSA funding. This includes a comprehensive planning, submission, and approval process for ESSA LEA plans as well as a comprehensive monitoring that addresses the monitoring of federal funds.

[end NJDOE response]

1. Entrance and Exit Procedures (ESEA section 3113(b)(2))

Describe how the SEA will establish and implement, with timely and meaningful consultation with LEAs representing the geographic diversity of the State, standardized, statewide entrance and exit procedures, including an assurance that all students who may be English learners are assessed for such status within 30 days of enrollment in a school in the State.

[begin NJDOE response]

Identification of Eligible Multilingual Learners

Under State law (N.J.A.C. 6A:15-1.3), the NJDOE requires that all students who may be multilingual learners are assessed in a timely manner to ensure all students receive an appropriate public education and to meet the parent notification requirements set forth by ESSA section 3113 (N.J.A.C. 6A:15-1.12). Each LEA shall notify, by written communication, the parent of a multilingual learner that their child has been

identified as eligible for placement in a LIEP. The LEA shall issue the notification within 30 calendar days of the start of the school year. For a student who enrolls after the beginning of the school year, the LEA board of education shall issue the notification within 14 calendar days of the student being placed in a LIEP.

Every LEA is required to follow the multi-step process detailed below to ensure consistency and statewide standardization for identifying multilingual learners:

Step 1: Administration of the Standardized New Jersey Home-Language Survey

Each LEA board of education shall administer the Statewide home-language survey to each student enrolled in the LEA. The LEA shall use the survey to determine which students in preschool to 12th grade have a primary language(s) other than English and, therefore, may be multilingual learners.

Step 2: Records Review Process

Following the administration of the Statewide home-language survey, the LEA shall conduct a records review process to determine whether the student is a multilingual learner. The records review process may include, but is not limited to, reviewing available information about the student's overall academic performance from current or prior years, observations of teaching staff members who have worked with the student, interviews with the student or the student's parent or family in their primary language, and/or additional school records as needed and in compliance with state and federal student privacy laws.

Step 3: Administer English Language Proficiency (ELP) Assessment

If the results of the above review suggest the student is a potential multilingual learner, the LEA shall then determine the English language proficiency of all kindergarten through grade 12 students by administering an English language proficiency assessment. Students who do not meet the NJDOE-established cut score on the English language proficiency assessment shall be considered multilingual learners and shall be offered entry into the LEA's LIEP.

NJDOE updated State regulations in 2023 to require LEAs to identify multilingual learners starting in the preschool — not kindergarten — grades.

Multilingual Learner Exit Process

Every LEA is required to follow the process described in this section to ensure consistency and standardization for exiting multilingual learners. Multilingual learners must be assessed annually through an English language proficiency assessment to measure progress toward English language proficiency and to determine readiness for exiting the LIEP. Students who meet the criteria for statewide alternate assessments must also be assessed annually using an alternate ELP assessment.

A multilingual learner has demonstrated readiness to exit once they have achieved the NJDOE-established cut score on an ELP or alternate ELP assessment a NJDOE-established English language observation form that considers: classroom performance; the student's reading level in English; the observations of the teaching staff members responsible for the educational program of the student; and performance on achievement tests in English. When the review process for exiting a student has been completed, the LEA shall notify, by written communication, the student's parent of the determination.

A multilingual learner with a disability, whose disability makes it impossible for the student to be assessed in a particular domain because there are no appropriate accommodations for assessing the student in that domain, may be exited from multilingual learner status based on the student meeting the NJDOE-determined cut score on the remaining domains in which the student was assessed. Additionally, the student's readiness must be further assessed using an NJDOE-established English language observation form that considers, at a minimum: classroom performance; the student's reading level in English; the observations of the teaching staff members responsible for the educational program of the student; and performance on achievement tests in English.

When the review process for exiting a student from an LIEP has been completed, the LEA shall notify, by written communication, the student's parent of the determination.

[end NJDOE response]

2. SEA Support for English Learner Progress (ESEA section 3113(b)(6))

Describe how the SEA will assist eligible entities in meeting:

- i. The State-designed long-term goals established under ESEA section 1111(c)(4)(A)(ii), including measurements of interim progress towards meeting such goals, based on the State's English language proficiency assessments under ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(G); and
 - ii. The challenging State academic standards.
-

[begin NJDOE response]

New Jersey takes a comprehensive, collaborative approach to supporting, monitoring, and providing technical assistance to LEAs as it relates to ESSA. New Jersey collects feedback from stakeholders through multiple avenues, such as post-webinar surveys, office hours, and LEA suggestions to drive how the State connects with LEAs. In addition, New Jersey leverages Title III funds to focus directly on the needs of all multilingual learners to achieve the statewide goals which include, but are not limited to, meeting the State's ELP targets, successful participation in classrooms where English is the primary medium of instruction, increasing participation in the Seal of Biliteracy, and closing the graduation gap.

Professional Development

On an ongoing basis, the NJDOE provides professional development to all LEAs to ensure they can support multilingual learners in meeting or exceeding the New Jersey Student Learning Standards. The offerings vary by year based on the needs expressed by families, educators supporting multilingual learners, LEA administrators and other stakeholders and have covered topics such as regulatory changes, best practices around the LIEP and recruitment of multilingual educators.

Aligning English Language Development Standards with New Jersey State Standards and Assessments

The NJDOE recently completed a process to evaluate the alignment between English language development standards, the New Jersey Student Learning Standards, and the New Jersey statewide assessments. In subsequent years, the NJDOE will continue to monitor and adjust standards and assessments as part of its continuous improvement process.

Regulatory Changes

New Jersey regularly reviews and updates its administrative code as part of its commitment to continuous improvement. In July 2023, the State Board of Education adopted amendments to N.J.A.C. 6A:15, Bilingual Education. These State regulations describe the LEA's responsibilities for identifying and supporting their students who are multilingual learners, and the services multilingual learners need to meet or exceed the New Jersey Student Learning Standards to reach graduation and post-secondary success.

Key regulatory changes from 2023 include:

Figure E.1: Adopted Amendments to Chapter 15

Adopted Amendments to Chapter 15	Summary
Shift to asset-based language (e.g., replace English language learner with multilingual learner).	Recognizes the assets students and their families bring to school and academic learning and success.
Include students in an NJDOE-approved preschool program to be identified as a multilingual learner.	Creates an opportunity for schools to access federal funding to support program development and build capacity among educators including preschool teachers, principals, and other school leaders.
Require high school English as a second language (ESL) Course Credit Policy.	Creates an equitable pathway for multilingual learners to earn graduation credits while developing their English language proficiency.
Add dual language immersion program for the purpose of meeting the LIEP requirements.	Clarifies dual language immersion program requirements, including ESL and teacher certification requirements, to ensure multilingual learners have access to model dual language immersion programs.
Enhance teacher training to include English language development standards.	Ensures all teachers have access to professional development which allows them to support the English language development of multilingual learners.
Provide an example list of documents to be translated to align with federal requirements.	Recognizes the importance of LEA engagement with culturally and linguistically diverse families to support student success.

[end NJDOE response]

3. Monitoring and Technical Assistance (ESEA section 3113(b)(8)):

Describe:

- i. How the SEA will monitor the progress of each eligible entity receiving a Title III, Part A subgrant in helping English learners achieve English proficiency; and
- ii. The steps the SEA will take to further assist eligible entities if the strategies funded under ESSA to meet identified student needs effectively and efficiently. For that reason, NJDOE has and will Title III, Part A are not effective, such as providing technical assistance and modifying such strategies.

[begin NJDOE response]

The process outlined below encompasses the monitoring and technical assistance process for LEAs receiving ESSA funding, including Title III. Rather than focusing solely on one title, New Jersey offers LEAs a comprehensive planning, submission, and approval process for ESSA LEA plans as well as a comprehensive monitoring that addresses the monitoring of federal funds.

Development and Submission of LEA ESSA Plan

The NJDOE's goal in supporting the development, review, and approval of LEA plans is to help LEAs ensure their plans and developing and implementing them will most effectively lead to success for all students. The NJDOE recognizes that coordinating various state and federal programs, services, and funding can be challenging. For this reason, the NJDOE is committed to helping LEAs, in consultation with stakeholders, focusing first on the LEA's specific student needs and then on the various federal, state, and local supports that can be combined and coordinated to support students.

The NJDOE follows a process for both state and LEA planning that includes the following: needs assessment, including data analysis; plan development, including exploration and selection of evidence-based practices and outcomes; plan implementation; and evaluation of implementation and outcomes. As part of the process, the NJDOE is committed to supporting LEAs in the planning and using funds received under Title III. The NJDOE will continue to review and refine, with stakeholder input, its LEA application and review process to ensure LEAs receive support throughout the process, are not unduly burdened by paperwork, and can fully express how they intend to expend funds under the law to meet the needs of students. A technical description of the NJDOE's application and approval process follows.

Development of LEA Plan

Before the availability of the consolidated LEA application (the mechanism for submission of the LEA plan), the NJDOE issues a memorandum reminding LEAs of available guidance on the development of their plans. The NJDOE also hosts county-level technical assistance sessions in which the NJDOE staff (including Title III) offer LEAs hands-on assistance in developing and submitting their LEA plans. During the technical assistance sessions, the NJDOE meets with LEA staff to provide guidance on how specific funding sources may be used to meet specific student needs and to ensure compliance with

policies, regulations, and procedures that apply uniformly to federal awards and audit proceedings, thereby allowing the NJDOE to define allowable and allocable costs as outlined in the parameters of each grant program. The technical assistance sessions also offer an opportunity for LEA staff to provide the NJDOE feedback on the application platform, the review and approval process, and how the NJDOE can better support LEA applications in the next year.

Developing the most effective supports and programs begins with identifying what all students need to succeed; therefore, the NJDOE’s LEA application includes a robust needs assessment section. The NJDOE reinforces to LEAs, both through technical assistance and the application, the importance of conducting a thorough needs assessment, identifying root causes, and targeting resources to address root causes. This section of the application allows LEAs to input their needs assessment results and identify the specific student needs addressed with ESSA funds in the next year.

Submission of LEA Plan

LEAs submit their plans as part of the NJDOE’s ESEA Consolidated Subgrant Application through the Electronic Web-Enabled Grant (EWEG) system. As part of the submission process, all applications undergo a consistency check to ensure that LEAs address all required programmatic and fiscal components. Acceptance of the application in the EWEG system constitutes submission of the LEA plan in “substantially approvable” form and authorizes LEAs to begin obligation of funds to support programmatic activities.

Review and Approval of LEA Plan

After an LEA’s ESEA Consolidated Subgrant Application is accepted in the EWEG system, program and fiscal aspects of the LEA plan are further examined and evaluated as part of a two-tier review and approval process, which includes the following:

- Tier I review and approval is conducted by the NJDOE staff working in the county office of education of the county in which the LEA is located.
- Tier II review and approval is conducted by grant specialists in the NJDOE’s Office of Grants Management.

County offices of education and Office of Grants Management staff use review guide checklists designed by program offices for each tier of the review and approval process. Upon review at either the Tier I level or Tier II level, the LEA is notified electronically via the EWEG system if revisions are needed. LEAs are required to make the identified revisions and resubmit the LEA plan.

Upon final approval at the Tier II level, the LEA is notified electronically via the EWEG system that the application has received final NJDOE approval, and the LEA may begin to submit via the EWEG system reimbursement requests for payment of the associated grant funds.

Additional Multilingual Learners Plan & Waiver Submissions

In addition to annual ESSA plans, New Jersey regulations for Bilingual Education in N.J.A.C. 6A:15-1.5, require LEAs to submit a plan describing their LIEP for multilingual learners every three years. The LIEP plan is an opportunity for LEAs to review the academic needs of their multilingual learners and the type of language assistance program, including the academic and linguistic environment that would best

address those assets and needs. In developing the LIEP plan, LEAs are required to evaluate their current program and services for multilingual learners and design them in such a way that provides the language, foundational, and grade-level skills that students need to make a successful transition to classes with their English-speaking peers. For LEAs with 20 or more multilingual learners in a single language group throughout kindergarten through grade 12 whose age range, grade span, and/or geographic location of the multilingual learners make it impractical to provide a full-time bilingual program, LEAs may annually submit a waiver from the requirement. The NJDOE works collaboratively with LEAs submitting a waiver to ensure that multilingual learners' assets are supported and linguistic needs are still being met.

Collaborative Monitoring

ESSA, along with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and other federal statutes and regulations require LEAs to provide programs and services to schools within their local jurisdiction.

The laws further require that the SEA, in this case, the NJDOE, monitor the implementation and execution of federal programs by the sub-recipients. The NJDOE has consolidated its monitoring practices so that one collaborative monitoring process is used to monitor nearly all aspects of federal acts.:

Each year, the NJDOE selects LEAs to monitor based on a Collaborative Monitoring Risk Assessment Tool that is designed to evaluate each LEA's aggregate risk of noncompliance with federal and state requirements. The Risk Assessment Tool utilizes Risk Indicators and includes measures related to both academic and fiscal performance. Based on the aggregate results, LEAs are placed into one of 3 categories:

- Intensive Support
- Targeted Support
- Universal Support

Intensive Support

LEAs with the highest Aggregate Risk Assessment based on all applicable Risk Indicators are placed in the Intensive Support Tier unless they have undergone collaborative monitoring in the last three years or are scheduled to undergo Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC) monitoring in the current year. Those identified for intensive support receive onsite monitoring.

Targeted Support

LEAs with the next highest Aggregate Risk Assessments based on all applicable Risk Indicators are placed in the Targeted Support Tier and receive a desk review.

Universal Support

Provided with general support and guidance but are not slated for formal monitoring.

Additional Notes on Title III Monitoring

In addition to ESSA, support for multilingual learners is guided by the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974, 20 U.S.C. §§ 1701 et seq. ("EEOA"), which requires LEAs to take appropriate action to overcome language barriers that impede equal participation by its students in its instructional programs."

20 U.S.C. § 1703(f). New Jersey has integrated all elements of this law into Title III monitoring, placing particular emphasis on those in the intensive and targeted support categories or those who are not meeting academic standards specifically for multilingual learners to ensure both compliance with the law and successful outcomes for students.

General Technical Assistance

The NJDOE is committed to providing timely, meaningful, and ongoing technical assistance to LEAs to ensure they understand how ESSA may affect allocations, requirements, and use of federal funds. To accomplish this, the NJDOE has created and will continue to update a technical assistance calendar of events to support LEAs with the implementation of programmatic and fiscal requirements. The NJDOE continues to develop ESSA guidance materials (e.g., presentations, webinars, documents, funding guides) for its website. In addition, the NJDOE has and will continue to provide personalized outreach and differentiated technical assistance to: LEAs most affected by changes in funding; LEAs with specific implementation considerations (such as charter school applicants or LEAs with a large percentage of nonpublic schools); and LEAs or schools where the NJDOE data reflects the need for significant programmatic changes. For instance, LEAs that report the enrollment of students experiencing homelessness receive on-site technical assistance on the availability of services under the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and the use of federal funds to support the needs of identified students. LEAs reporting increased enrollment of multilingual learners receive technical assistance on appropriate program options and professional development to assist general education teachers who work with multilingual learners.

The annual technical assistance calendar for all of ESSA includes events that are open to all LEAs, including ESSA project director's training; workshops on transitioning to a Title I schoolwide program; equitable services workshops; Title II/IV new coordinators meeting, homeless education statewide conference; family and community engagement webinars; title-specific office hours, and face-to-face tutorials in completing the program requirements contained in the LEA application. The NJDOE hosts a wealth of materials (developed both by the NJDOE and the USED) related to ESSA program requirements on its website. Additionally, the NJDOE hosts many ESSA resources on its central [ESSA webpage](#). This site is updated regularly and contains guidance materials developed by the USED and the NJDOE and vetted, reliable external sources. In addition to the materials noted above, the NJDOE regularly collaborates with stakeholders to provide LEAs with activity-based guidance on how federal and state funds can be combined to support a series of high-impact activities, as well as guidance on how to create meaningful stakeholder engagement at the LEA level. In doing so, the NJDOE intends to help LEAs work with their school communities to more creatively leverage funds to support the unique needs of their students.

Additional Notes on Title III Specific Technical Assistance

To supplement a robust annual technical assistance calendar open to all LEAs, the Office of Supplemental Educational Programs offers technical assistance specifically related to the requirements under Title III and the distinctive supports necessary for multilingual learners. In addition to the office hours, additional offerings include:

- A series for instructional staff, child study team members, administrators, and personnel responsible for supporting students dually identified as multilingual learners and eligible for special education and related services. The series has created several cohorts of experts throughout the State with knowledge of the difference between second language acquisition and a learning disability;
- An on-demand online course series hosted by Stockton University (and funded by the NJDOE) available to all New Jersey educators, enabling participation in a train-the-trainer course on Sheltered English Instruction pedagogy and practice; and
- Asynchronous, online access to the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) professional development offerings. All New Jersey educators have access to a suite of online and hybrid offerings. Topics include the 2020 English language development Standards, Alternate ACCESS, Expanding Reading Instruction, and Interpreting ACCESS Scores for Instructional Practices.

Additionally, Title III provides significant oversight and support for LEAs identified as not meeting the needs of multilingual learners. These LEAs can be identified in one of four ways:

1. Via collaborative monitoring;
2. Through the formal accountability system described in Title I, Part A;
3. Through the review of the LEAs triennial three-year plan; and
4. Through the NJDOE's annual review of multilingual learner enrollment and achievement data as well as data regarding appropriate teacher qualifications.

Once identified, LEAs received targeted technical assistance. For those who are identified as lacking appropriate documentation, the NJDOE provides guidance and follow-up to ensure completion. For LEAs identified for low academic achievement, the LEA is required to complete a multilingual learner needs assessment and an Instructional Support Plan that is approved and further monitored by the NJDOE. In addition, all LEAs that have not been able to fill multilingual education positions are invited to monthly office hours to discuss new recruitment approaches and how to best support multilingual learners in the absence of appropriate instructors.

[end NJDOE response]

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

1. Use of Funds (ESEA section 4103(c)(2)(A))

Describe how the SEA will use funds received under Title IV, Part A, Subpart 1 for State-level activities.

[begin NJDOE response]

Due to the success of the NJTSS framework of academic and behavioral supports and interventions to improve student achievement, the NJDOE will use Title IVA, Part A funding to expand and enhance the NJDOE professional learning opportunities related to NJTSS. The framework is not meant to be a prescriptive, one-size-fits-all requirement or compliance exercise to meet the needs of students. Instead, NJTSS is a recommended framework based on best practices determined by research and practitioners to provide educators with a systematic way to address learner variability and to engage all students in learning the NJSLS. NJTSS includes regular monitoring of student progress, data-based decision-making, and implementation of a continuum of supports and interventions based on student performance. NJTSS offers educators a variety of evidence-based practices designed to improve student achievement and promote positive student outcomes.

In conjunction with NJTSS, State regulations require schools to identify the learning, behavior, and health difficulties of students through the collection of appropriate data. In response to a need for intervening early and the need for a systematic approach to instructional interventions, the NJDOE adopted regulations (N.J.A.C. 6A:16-8). establishing intervention and referral services (“I&RS”). When implemented with fidelity, NJTSS is a framework that schools can use to fulfill the intervention and referral services requirements while also providing pre-referral services in a targeted and research-based approach. As such, an LEA with regularly scheduled intervention and referral services meetings can pivot I&RS meetings to NJTSS meetings and still fulfill and meet State requirements. Intervention and referral services shall be provided to support students in general education programming as well as students who have been determined to need special education programs and services. As appropriate, this shall be coordinated with the child study team and the student’s IEP planning.

The NJDOE has released videos as part of an ongoing NJTSS Professional Learning series and will use this series to promote and highlight the effectiveness of NJTSS. This series is intended to provide the end user, LEA personnel and administrators with a roadmap to understand the deployment of a tiered system of supports. This type of work is all-encompassing, and the structure of the videos is not linear like the essential components are laid out, but in a way that captures the unique needs of LEAs.

When discussing readiness to implement, NJTSS technical assistance leans on the principles of implementation science. The phases of implementation can be broadly applied to the NJTSS implementation overall, and the phases by themselves can be applicable to building leadership teams, especially as new members join and landscape changes that occur over time in an LEA. It is critical to ensure that the LEA and school leadership teams share a common vision for the implementation of a tiered system of supports. This process often involves revisiting team and leadership structures as

personnel changes occur. It is critical to ensure that the LEA and school leadership teams share a common vision for the implementation of a tiered system of supports.

For the Professional Learning series, each video will provide the end user with not only a video webinar but also customizable presentation slides and templates with pertinent information to learn or turnkey and present to staff.

As the landscape in New Jersey continues to move toward supporting tiered models of support, the NJDOE is working to develop an I&RS Technical Manual that can provide LEAs with key operational elements to fulfill the I&RS administrative code requirements with a tiered system of supports model.

Through guidance materials, web-based resources, in-person training, and on-site support, the NJDOE assists educators in schools and LEAs that choose to implement NJTSS to better meet each student's unique needs.

Data-Based Decision Making for Addressing Chronic Absenteeism was developed to provide LEAs with guidance on responding to chronic absenteeism. The guidance incorporates State-specific rules, regulations, and a span of available resources. Schools and LEAs can refer to this resource to develop research-based action plans that include strategies that specifically target the barriers contributing to their students' absences. This resource provides a step-by-step guide that begins with identifying key LEA members, collecting and analyzing actionable data, and supports LEAs in ultimately installing and operating a tiered model to address student absenteeism and encourage regular attendance.

For students to learn and achieve their fullest potential, it is critical that they are in school and engaged in the learning process. The idea behind a multi-tiered approach when addressing chronic absenteeism is that the majority of students will respond to school-wide strategies for improving attendance and engagement (known as Tier 1 supports), but these strategies will not be sufficient for all students: some students require more personalized support (Tier 2) and an even smaller number may need more intensive measures (Tier 3) taken on their behalf to reengage them with school.

Research shows that student absences impact a child's ability to succeed in school.⁶ Chronic absence affects nearly 8 million students in the United States each year. Missing just two days a month over a school year can lead to serious disparities in student outcomes. In addition, there is evidence that chronic absenteeism from school is a primary cause of low academic achievement and a powerful predictor of a student's risk of dropping out of school.

⁶ [“A Tiered Approach to Ensuring Students Are Present, Engaged, and Supported in the 2020-21 School Year” Ed Policy](#) ; [“The Importance of Being in School: A Report on Absenteeism in the Nation's Public Schools”](#).ed.gov ; University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research. (2014). [Five key findings for middle grades from looking forward to high school and college](#)” Attendance Works.

2. Awarding Subgrants (ESEA section 4103(c)(2)(B))

Describe how the SEA will ensure that awards made to LEAs under Title IV, Part A, Subpart 1 are in amounts that are consistent with ESEA section 4105(a)(2).

[begin NJDOE response]

The NJDOE plans to administer Title IV, Part A subgrants to LEAs by formula. In accordance with section 4105(a)(2) of ESSA, the NJDOE will ensure that no allocation to an LEA in the State is an amount that is less than \$10,000 except in cases where a ratable reduction in LEA allocations is appropriate in accordance with 4105(b). To comply with this requirement, the NJDOE will run an internal formula based on 4105(a)(1) and any USED guidance related to Title IV, Part A LEA allocations.

The NJDOE's Electronic Web-enable Grant (EWEG) system is used by LEAs to apply for ESSA funds and by the NJDOE to process LEA applications. With the passage of ESSA, the NJDOE has had to update EWEG to include Title IV, Part A. Based on guidance received from the USED, that portion of the application is being designed so the system will not allow for a Title IV, Part A LEA allocation of less than \$10,000 except in cases where a ratable reduction in LEA allocations is appropriate in accordance with 4105(b).

[end NJDOE response]

G. Title IV, Part B: Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers

[begin NJDOE response]

Overview

Under Title IV, Part B, Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLCs) are defined as centers that offer, during non-school hours or periods when school is not in session, academic remediation and enrichment activities in tandem with a broad array of additional services, programs, and activities that are designed to reinforce and complement the regular academic program of participating students, including youth development activities; service learning; nutrition and health education; drug and violence prevention programs; counseling programs; arts, music, physical fitness and wellness programs; technology education programs; financial and environmental literacy programs; mathematics, science, career and technical, internship or apprenticeship programs; and other ties to an in-demand industry sector or occupation for high school students. The centers also offer families of students served opportunities for active and meaningful engagement in their children’s education, including literacy and related educational development.

1. Use of Funds (ESEA section 4203(a)(2))

Describe how the SEA will use funds received under the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, including funds reserved for State-level activities.

[begin NJDOE response]

Vision for 21st Century Community Learning Centers in New Jersey

The vision for New Jersey’s 21st CCLC program is to support the development of high-quality, out-of-school time programs through community learning centers that provide services that impact both the academic and social skills of participating youth. The provision of services through 21st CCLCs programs throughout the State will:

- Increase students’ career and college readiness by offering high-quality remediation activities in core academic areas, such as ELA and mathematics, and enrichment activities, including arts and culture, youth development experiences and physical activity;
- Increase positive student behavior by infusing social, emotional, and character development into the program;
- Engage adult family members of students served through participation in an array of parental involvement activities; and
- Establish and maintain partnerships and collaborative relationships to ensure participants’ access to all available resources through coordinated efforts and to sustain programs.

To integrate cross-content information and skills and to further the alignment of 21st CCLCs to the school day and provide a seamless continuum of educational experiences, the NJDOE requires 21st CCLCs grantees focus on one of the following themes:

- Science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM);
- Civic engagement;
- Career awareness and exploration; or
- Visual and performing arts.

New Jersey's Use of Funds for 21st Century Community Learning Centers

The NJDOE will use the federal funding to support and sustain the use of 21st CCLC programs that provide academic enrichment opportunities during non-school hours for children, particularly those who are most in need. The program helps students meet state and local student standards in core academic subjects, such as ELA and mathematics; offers students a broad array of enrichment activities that can complement students' regular academic programs; and offers literacy and other educational services to the families of participating children. On average there are approximately 65 21st CCLC programs operating annually throughout New Jersey. The programs currently receive awards from \$250,000 to \$550,000 a year for five years. Note that New Jersey anticipates increasing the award amount periodically to account for inflation. A competitive grant solicitation is released each spring.

As permitted in ESSA, the NJDOE also intends to use funds to support the NJDOE staff and contracted providers to oversee and support the implementation of quality 21st CCLC programs, which includes monitoring, supporting capacity building, training, and technical assistance, to ensure that grantees align their activities with the challenging state academic standards and conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of programs and activities. The NJDOE contracts with an external provider to conduct a statewide evaluation of the 21st CCLC programs. The State-level evaluation includes an assessment of grantee progress towards achieving the State-mandated goals and objectives; the impact on youth and their families; and the effectiveness of the State's administration of the 21st CCLC program. American Institutes for Research (AIR) administers staff, youth, and parent surveys, interviews program staff, and analyzes qualitative and quantitative data and will provide a series of webinars and presentations that support quality improvement efforts, including regional planning with data sessions.

Additionally, the NJDOE awarded a grant to a training and technical assistance provider to improve the quality of afterschool, summer, and before-school programming and build the capacity of staff in all 21st CCLC programs. Services cover the following four areas:

1. Developing and conducting capacity building training and technical assistance for the grantees;
2. Assisting the NJDOE in ensuring the implementation of quality programs;
3. Facilitating networking opportunities for out-of-school time program providers throughout New Jersey; and
4. Using data-driven strategies for enhancing trainings and technical assistance.

[end NJDOE response]

2. Awarding Subgrants (ESEA section 4203(a)(4))

Describe the procedures and criteria the SEA will use for reviewing applications and awarding 21st Century Community Learning Centers funds to eligible entities on a competitive basis, which shall include procedures and criteria that take into consideration the likelihood that a proposed community learning center will help participating students meet the challenging State academic standards and any local academic standards.

[begin NJDOE response]

General SEA Subgrant Provisions

The NJDOE will continue to distribute Title IV, Part B funds through the procedures and processes established by the Office of Grants Management. Awards will be issued on an annual competitive basis as funds are available. Subgrantees will be required to submit quarterly fiscal and program reports to verify that expenditures and activities are aligned with the program's purposes. Additionally, the NJDOE will conduct on-site monitoring and quality visits to 21st CCLCs subgrantees in their first and third years of funding.

The NJDOE releases a total of two notices of grant opportunities (NGOs):

1. 21st CCLCs competitive NGO for a five-year grant period;
2. 21st CCLCs continuation non-competitive NGO for agencies in years two through five;

21st CCLCs subgrantees are required to provide both after-school and summer programs from September 1 through August 31 for each year in which the subgrantee receives funding. The minimum number of students each provider must serve is 75. Providing before-school programs is optional. Based on stakeholder feedback, the NJDOE will permit subgrantees to serve students in any grade from 3 through 12 or multiple grades.

Eligibility Requirements & Application Process

The NJDOE will utilize a competitive process to make awards to eligible entities that serve:

- Students who primarily attend schools implementing comprehensive or targeted support and improvement activities under Section 1111(d) of ESSA; or
- Students attending other schools determined by the LEA to be in need of intervention and support; and
- Families of students in the two above categories.

As a result, the NJDOE has identified the following three ways that a potential 21st CCLC can meet the above requirements:

- Utilize the NJDOE's current list of comprehensive or targeted schools;
- Allow LEAs to determine schools in need of intervention and support by targeting students who attend schools where a minimum of 30 percent of the student population is eligible for free lunch and/or milk, as documented in the most recent Application for State School Aid count of enrolled children; or

- Allow LEAs to submit a rationale for their selection process, which must include state or LEA data.

Additionally, if a potential 21st CCLC is supporting a school that is not on the current list of comprehensive or targeted schools they are required to:

- Enroll students who may be at-risk for academic failure, dropping out of school or involvement in criminal or delinquent activities, or who lack positive role models through established criteria and processes to enroll the students accompanied by rationales for the selection processes, which must include state or LEA data; and
- Provide assurances the activities proposed are either not currently accessible or would expand current offerings.

Pre-screened External Organizations

Section 4203(a)(11) of ESSA established a new requirement for an entity entitled external organization, which is defined as “a non-profit organization with a record of success in running or working with before- and after-school (or summer recess) programs and activities or, in the case where there is no such organization, a non-profit organization in the community that enters into a written agreement or partnership with an organization to receive mentoring and guidance in running or working with before- and after-school (or summer recess) programs and activities” [Sec. 4201(b)(4)]. Under this new provision, states are required to pre-screen, upon request, external organizations that could potentially qualify and to make available to eligible entities a list of external organizations that successfully complete the pre-screening process. The provision is designed to provide an opportunity for the State to identify organizations that could aid in carrying out the authorized activities under Title IV, Part B.

The NJDOE will use the following pre-screening requirements: the external organization must be an operating nonprofit organization in New Jersey as determined by proof of 501(c)(3) status and must have a minimum of five years of experience operating or delivering services to out-of-school time programs and activities.

To assist external organizations that are interested in participating in this pre-screening process, the NJDOE has identified the following action items:

- Develop an annual provider profile wherein providers can request to be pre-screened;
- Conduct pre-screening of external organizations that are interested in providing assistance in carrying out the activities required in ESSA according to approved pre-screening requirements; and
- Develop and make available to eligible entities a list of external organizations that complete the pre-screening process.

Interested organizations must have completed and submitted a provider profile to the NJDOE by the established deadline. The NJDOE posted the list of pre-screened external organizations on the NJDOE’s website and will allow successfully pre-screened organizations to remain on the posted list until the NJDOE determines the next pre-screened external organization deadline. The following is a list of disclaimers posted along with the profile:

- No funding is directly associated with the profile process and the profile solicitation will not result in a contract with the NJDOE;

- The NJDOE reserves the right to omit any organization from the list for failure to complete the profile in its entirety;
- The NJDOE reserves the right to remove an organization from the list if it fails to meet the minimum record of success;
- The NJDOE does not guarantee any work will be given to any organization that is included on the list;
- All information submitted by an external organization in response to the profile solicitation will be considered public information, except as exempt from public disclosure by the Open Public Records Act (N.J.S.A. 47:1A-1 et seq.) and common law;
- The NJDOE neither certifies the quality of activities provided by the organizations nor endorses any organization listed; and
- The NJDOE will periodically review the pre-screened list and remove any organization that has been debarred.

[end NJDOE response]

H. Title V, Part B, Subpart 2: Rural and Low-Income School Program

[begin NJDOE response]

Overview

Title V, Part B of ESSA was established to meet the unique needs of rural schools and LEAs. These LEAs often lack the personnel and resources needed to apply for federal competitive grants and receive formula-based federal grants that are too small to be used for the intended purposes. Note that New Jersey receives a very a small allocation which supports only a few LEAs and anticipates this will be the case going forward.

New Jersey is awarded funds under Title V, Part B through a formula grant award. In turn, New Jersey awards sub-grants to eligible LEAs according to a formula based on the number of students in average daily attendance served by the eligible LEAs. The LEAs may utilize funding for activities authorized under Title I, Title II, Part A, Title III, and Title IV, Part A of the ESEA, as well as parental involvement activities.

[end NJDOE response]

1. Outcomes and Objectives (ESEA section 5223(b)(1))

Provide information on program objectives and outcomes for activities under Title V, Part B, Subpart 2, including how the SEA will use funds to help all students meet the challenging State academic standards.

[begin NJDOE response]

The LEA’s application will address which activities under the Rural and Low-Income School (RLIS) program they will be participating in and describe program objectives and outcomes to specifically address how these funds will help students meet the challenging state academic standards.

Figure H.1: Program Objectives and Outcomes for Rural and Low-Income School

Objective	Outcome	Timeframe
Ensure all eligible LEAs receive timely notification that they may complete the RLIS section in the ESSA consolidated application.	Increase the opportunity for all students to meet the challenging state academic standards and accountability performance goals.	Annually

Objective	Outcome	Timeframe
Ensure that RLIS LEAs are monitored for alignment between grant application and use of funds for authorized activities and progress toward goals.	Recommendations for improvement to support appropriate use of funds and application goals and/or commendations.	Annually
Ensure RLIS LEAs set performance goals.	Measurement to monitor progress of all students to meet the challenging state academic standards and accountability performance goals.	Annually
Engage RLIS LEAs in ongoing, collaborative discussion to determine needs.	Provide appropriate technical assistance and/or resources.	Quarterly and upon request by the LEA

[end NJDOE response]

2. Technical Assistance (ESEA section 5223(b)(3))

Describe how the SEA will provide technical assistance to eligible LEAs to help such agencies implement the activities described in ESEA section 5222.

[begin NJDOE response]

As stated in the chart above, the NJDOE will engage the few LEAs receiving support in this title with ongoing, collaborative discussions to determine their needs on a quarterly basis and upon request by the LEA. Based on the needs identified, the NJDOE will find and/or directly provide appropriate technical assistance and/or resources.

[end NJDOE response]

I. Education for Homeless Children and Youth program, McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, Title VII, Subtitle B

[begin NJDOE response]

Overview

The McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth (McKinney-Vento) program, authorized under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (McKinney-Vento Act), is designed to ensure students experiencing homelessness receive the additional support and services they need to be successful. These supplemental supports and services are provided above and beyond the services that all students receive to ensure students experiencing homelessness have equal access to enroll in and attend school, complete their high school education, achieve success following graduation, and to help them avoid poverty and homelessness as adults. Areas of direct support include ensuring access to and removal of barriers from enrolling in school, extracurricular activities, academic programs, and nutritional and health-related programs that may otherwise be challenging due to the lack of a home address.

In New Jersey, the McKinney-Vento program supports federal efforts through regional partnership projects that serve homeless children and youth throughout New Jersey's 21 counties. To the extent possible, all identified homeless children and youth in the region are expected to be served. To that end, the NJDOE established a three-year limited, competitive grant program to create partnerships between LEAs and service agencies strategically located in each region of the State for the purposes of coordinating and providing supplemental academic programs and support services to homeless children and youth residing in the partnership's regional area. In addition to the provision of technical assistance to LEAs, the regional McKinney-Vento projects also identify and establish partnerships with regional service providers, state and county resources, and community-based and social service organizations, to assist LEAs in providing supplemental services and making referrals to appropriate agencies, thus ensuring all homeless children and youth in the partnership's regional area can meet the challenging state content and student performance standards.

In 2024, the NJDOE is conducting a Statewide comprehensive needs assessment to review gaps in serving its students experiencing homelessness. The assessment will be used to help develop an improved strategic approach to deliver educational and support services to students experiencing homelessness. If the review identifies additional needed supports, the NJDOE will submit an amendment to the plan specifically regarding those supports.

To improve compliance monitoring and support to LEAs, the NJDOE updated the process of identifying LEAs most at-risk for noncompliance with the McKinney-Vento requirements by creating a risk assessment tool. Specifically, the assessment relies on a combination of McKinney-Vento-related program and performance indicators to assess each LEA's program implementation and to identify LEAs in need of additional programmatic supports. Points are assigned to LEAs with at-risk indicators such as

under-identification, poor graduation rates, and chronic absenteeism of students experiencing homelessness.

LEAs are divided into five groups based on overall enrollment size. The highest scoring LEA within each enrollment group based on all applicable indicators will receive additional supports through monitoring activities conducted by the NJDOE Office of Supplemental Educational Programs, unless they have undergone collaborative intensive or collaborative desk monitoring in the last three years.

This section describes how the NJDOE will comply with the McKinney-Vento Act requirements related to:

1. Student identification;
2. Dispute resolution;
3. Support for school personnel and access to services.
4. Access to Services

[end NJDOE response]

1. Student Identification (722(g)(1)(B) of the McKinney-Vento Act)

Describe the procedures the SEA will use to identify homeless children and youth in the State and to assess their needs.

[begin NJDOE response]

The NJDOE provides Homeless Counts Data Workbooks to LEAs annually to support the identification of students and youth experiencing homelessness. The workbooks compile data from each LEA on the identification and performance of students experiencing homelessness and provide comparisons to New Jersey and national averages when possible. LEA personnel can use this data to identify strengths and weaknesses in their identification and support of students experiencing homelessness. Regional projects are also able to use the workbooks to provide technical assistance to LEAs.

To ensure school personnel are aware of their obligation regarding children and youths experiencing homelessness, LEA liaisons are required to train their respective school administrators, teachers, and support staff on recognizing potential indicators of homelessness and factors determining McKinney-Vento eligibility. Concurrently, LEAs are required to have registration and enrollment forms that permit parents, guardians, and unaccompanied youth to identify their living situations in a user-friendly, non-threatening manner.

The NJDOE and the regional partnership projects collaborate with runaway and homeless youth programs, along with other programs. These partnerships assist in identifying youth in need of services and provide support through street outreach, emergency shelters, transitional living, and maternity group home programs for young people experiencing homelessness. The aim is to protect and support vulnerable individuals. Through inter-agency partnerships and collaboration, such as point-in-time

surveys or housing questionnaires and cross-sector training opportunities, procedures to identify and serve the needs of New Jersey’s children and youth experiencing homelessness are outlined and implemented.

[end NJDOE response]

2. Dispute Resolution (722(g)(1)(C) of the McKinney-Vento Act)

Describe procedures for the prompt resolution of disputes regarding the educational placement of homeless children and youth.

[begin NJDOE response]

The NJDOE has an outlined procedure, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:17-2.7, Disputes and Appeals, to ensure disputes regarding the educational placement of children and youth experiencing homelessness are resolved within 48 hours of receipt of the dispute. The rules are disseminated to school personnel, principals and other school leaders, attendance officers, teachers, enrollment personnel, and specialized instructional support personnel as part of the NJDOE and regional trainings, and made available to all stakeholders on the NJDOE’s website: [N.J.A.C. 6A:17 \(PDF\)](#).

[end NJDOE response]

3. Support for School Personnel (722(g)(1)(D) of the McKinney-Vento Act)

Describe programs for school personnel (including the LEA liaisons for homeless children and youth, principals and other school leaders, attendance officers, teachers, enrollment personnel, and specialized instructional support personnel) to heighten the awareness of such school personnel of the specific needs of homeless children and youth, including runaway and homeless children and youth.

[begin NJDOE response]

Through its regional McKinney-Vento projects, the NJDOE serves children and youth experiencing homelessness throughout New Jersey’s 21 counties. Through required professional development for LEAs in their respective counties, the projects heighten the awareness of school and LEA personnel to the specific needs of runaway children and youth. In its NGO for prospective sub-recipients of McKinney-Vento funds, the NJDOE communicates the requirements for successful implementation of programs and services for students experiencing homelessness. One mandated activity for grantees is the implementation of professional development for school and LEA staff that focuses on:

Professional development and technical assistance for administrators, instructional staff and non-instructional staff to develop awareness and heighten understanding of, and

sensitivity to, the needs and rights of children and youth experiencing homelessness, and the specific educational needs of runaway and youth experiencing homelessness.

The NGO also articulates the use of funds for:

Programs coordinating services provided by schools and other agencies to eligible students to expand and enhance such services. Coordination with programs funded under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act should be included in this effort.

To further heighten school personnel's awareness of the specific needs of runaway children and youth experiencing homelessness, the NJDOE includes more frequent information sharing from representatives of organizations that serve runaway and youth experiencing homelessness, such as Covenant House.

The NJDOE and regional McKinney-Vento projects will continue to offer training to LEA personnel with responsibilities for the program. The current schedule of professional development opportunities includes monthly office hours for district/LEA homeless liaisons, regional training offered quarterly by each regional lead agency and during lead agency project director meetings. The NJDOE also implemented a process of certificating LEA liaisons to recognize the attainment of program-specific knowledge. Additional NJDOE strategies include disseminating annual reminders to LEAs regarding identification and enrollment of McKinney-Vento eligible students. Compliance is monitored through desk and on-site monitoring visits.

[end NJDOE response]

4. Access to Services (722(g)(1)(F) of the McKinney-Vento Act

Describe procedures that ensure that:

- i. Homeless children have access to public preschool programs, administered by the SEA or LEA, as provided to other children in the State;
 - ii. Homeless youth and youth separated from public schools are identified and accorded equal access to appropriate secondary education and support services, including by identifying and removing barriers that prevent youth described in this clause from receiving appropriate credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed while attending a prior school, in accordance with State, local, and school policies; and
 - iii. Homeless children and youth who meet the relevant eligibility criteria do not face barriers to accessing academic and extracurricular activities, including magnet school, summer school, career and technical education, advanced placement, online learning, and charter school programs, if such programs are available at the State and local levels.
-

[begin NJDOE response]

i. Ensuring Access to Preschool Programs

The NJDOE has outlined a procedure, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:17-2.4, Designation of LEA liaisons and their responsibilities, that requires LEAs to ensure all homeless families, children, and youth receive educational services to which they are eligible, including Head Start programs, and LEA-administered preschool programs. The rules are disseminated to school personnel, principals and other school leaders, attendance officers, teachers, enrollment personnel, and specialized instructional support personnel as part of the NJDOE and regional trainings and are publicly available on the NJDOE's Administrative Codes and Statutes for [Chapter 17](#) website.

The NJDOE also conducts on-site monitoring of LEAs' enrollment and student participation policies. During the monitoring, the NJDOE reviews appropriate documentation and provides technical assistance on actual and perceived barriers to homeless children's access to public preschool programs.

Finally, the NJDOE's coordinator of homeless student education services is a member of the New Jersey Council for Young Children. The council, which includes diverse early childhood education stakeholders, serves as an advisory group for recommendations that inform the Governor's cabinet on policy and funding for early childhood education. The inclusion of the State coordinator ensures policies and procedures are in place to address barriers to preschool enrollment for homeless children.

ii. Ensuring Access to Secondary Education and Support Services

The NJDOE and Regional LOA projects coordinate with a number of vital youth programs (e.g. Enhanced Prep to provide to a virtual tutoring platform; Bilingual health and social service navigators; and faith-based organizations providing free laundromat services) to ensure access to a free and appropriate public education in non-segregated, barrier-free environments along with the needed academic and social support services. Regional projects also partner with higher education institutions to support the successful transition of this student population. One such formal LOA and community college partnership is currently being piloted.

These partnerships involve increasing the identification of students who qualify for McKinney-Vento services and addressing the unique support needed for displaced youth to succeed beyond their high school years. Specific areas addressed are credit completion, support in navigating the transfer of credits from previously attended schools, college access and application advice, and financial aid application process.

iii. Ensuring Access to Academic and Extracurricular Activities

Annually, the NJDOE conducts on-site monitoring of all LEAs receiving McKinney-Vento funds and a sampling of LEAs not receiving McKinney-Vento funds, which includes charter schools and county vocational-technical LEAs. The monitoring of all non-grantee LEAs includes a review of LEA practices and policies to ensure that homeless students receive access to services/programs comparable to those received by other students. The monitoring protocol specifies access to some of the following services/programs:

- Advanced/accelerated courses;
- Vocational/technical education;

- Gifted talented education;
- Extended day/year programs; and
- Special admissions programs (e.g., magnet schools).

If barriers accessing academic and extracurricular activities are present, parents/guardians and other stakeholders are directed to communicate concerns to their respective school personnel, principals and/or other school leaders. If not resolved at the LEA level, [EHCY Regional Directors](#) or [county offices](#) should be contacted for guidance. Additionally, the NJDOE McKinney-Vento is also available at: McKinney.Vento@doe.nj.gov to provide support.

Ensuring Access to Nutrition Programs

The NJDOE broadcasts correspondence and enrollment reminders to LEAs to advise school personnel, principals, and other school leaders that McKinney-Vento children and youth are categorically eligible to receive free lunch. LEAs are further advised that LEA systems must ensure, once students are determined eligible, the appropriate food service personnel are communicated with to ensure immediate participation in federal, state and local nutrition programs.

[end NJDOE response]

5. Strategies to Address Other Problems (722(g)(1)(H) of the McKinney-Vento Act)

Provide strategies to address other problems with respect to the education of homeless children and youth, including problems resulting from enrollment delays that are caused by:

- requirements of immunization and other required health records;
- residency requirements;
- lack of birth certificates, school records, or other documentation;
- guardianship issues; or uniform or dress code requirements.

[begin NJDOE response]

The NJDOE has outlined a procedure, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:17-2.5, LEA enrollment, that explicitly requires the selected LEA to immediately enroll the homeless child or youth, even if he or she is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment such as previous academic records, medical records, proof of residency or other documentation. Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:17-2.4, LEA liaisons are required to ensure there are no barriers resulting from guardianship issues or uniform and/or dress code requirements. If barriers are present, parents/guardians and other stakeholders are directed to communicate concerns to their respective school personnel, principals, and/or other school leaders. If not resolved at the LEA level, county offices and the NJDOE program office contacts can be found on the [Homeless Education](#) webpage or directed to the NJDOE via email at: McKinney.Vento@doe.nj.gov.

[end NJDOE response]

6. Policies to Remove Barriers (722(g)(1)(I) of the McKinney-Vento Act)

Demonstrate that the SEA and LEAs in the State have developed, and shall review and revise, policies to remove barriers to the identification of homeless children and youth, and the enrollment and retention of homeless children and youth in schools in the State, including barriers to enrollment and retention due to outstanding fees or fines, or absences.

[begin NJDOE response]

The enactment of policies on the use of outstanding fees, fines, or absences is done at the LEA level. However, at the SEA level, the NJDOE’s monitoring of LOAs and LEAs with and without McKinney Vento funding, for compliance with the McKinney-Vento Program, McKinney-Vento Act, and State regulations on the education of homeless children addresses LEAs’ use of outstanding fees, fines, or absences and their adverse impact on the enrollment and retention of students experiencing homelessness. Specifically, the NJDOE’s monitoring protocol includes an indicator for the LEA to “review and revise policies and procedures which could act as barriers to the enrollment, attendance, participation, and success of homeless children and youth.”

Further, in its annual letter to LEAs on their responsibility to enroll students experiencing homelessness, the NJDOE reminds LEAs to review their policies on sanctions for students with outstanding fees, fines, or absences. The letter also directs LEAs to revise such policies to avoid placing barriers to the enrollment of homeless children and youth.

[end NJDOE response]

7. Assistance from Counselors (722(g)(1)(K))

A description of how youths described in section 725(2) will receive assistance from counselors to advise such youths, and prepare and improve the readiness of such youths for college.

[begin NJDOE response]

The academic success of New Jersey’s youth is heavily dependent on the ability of both the education and social service system to collaborate more effectively to provide essential support to displaced youth during their time of need. The McKinney-Vento Program is charged with assisting youth experiencing homelessness with pursuing higher education following high school. Local district/LEA homeless liaisons must provide information to support homeless and unaccompanied youth to succeed in post-secondary education opportunities.

A new college initiative is currently being piloted by one of NJDOE's regional LOAs. The LOA has forged a formal partnership with a lead community college that is responsible for:

1. Establishing a college liaison for direct interaction with district/LEA homeless liaisons;
2. Providing training for surrounding Higher Education/LEA personnel;
3. Providing training in the identification of Higher Education homeless students;
4. Establishing homeless student housing/food bank/pantry providers;
5. Establishing barrier free FAFSA completion assistance/procedures; and
6. Implementing Higher Education Financial Aid/support/admission forms and procedures.

Each district/LEA homeless liaison will work closely with the college liaison at the start of the semester to assist students with their academic path. Displaced students will also have full access to college counselors and advisors to ensure academic success.

[end NJDOE response]

Appendix A: Measurements of Interim Progress

Instructions

Each SEA must include the measurements of interim progress toward meeting the long-term goals for academic achievement, graduation rates, and English language proficiency, set forth in the State’s response to Title I, Part A question 4.iii, for all students and separately for each subgroup of students, including those listed in response to question 4.i.a. of this document. For academic achievement and graduation rates, the State’s measurements of interim progress must take into account the improvement necessary on such measures to make significant progress in closing statewide proficiency and graduation rate gaps.

A. Academic Achievement

Figure Appendix.A.1: English Language Arts Academic Achievement Targets

Student Group	2022-2023 Baseline	2023-2024 Target	2024-2025 Target	2025-2026 Target	2026-2027 Target	2027-2028 Target	2028-2029 Goal
All students	51.3	52.9	54.5	56.2	57.8	59.4	61
American Indian or Alaska Native	52.7	54.3	55.9	57.4	59	60.6	62.2
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	79.8	80.5	81.1	81.8	82.5	83.2	83.8
Black or African American	34	36.2	38.4	40.6	42.8	45	47.2
Economically Disadvantaged Students	33.4	35.6	37.8	40.1	42.3	44.5	46.7
Multilingual Learners	23.9	26.4	29	31.5	34	36.6	39.1
Hispanic or Latino	37.3	39.4	41.5	43.6	45.7	47.8	49.8
Students with Disabilities	19.2	21.9	24.6	27.3	30	32.7	35.4
Two or More Races	58.2	59.6	61	62.4	63.8	65.2	66.6
White	60.7	62	63.3	64.6	65.9	67.3	68.6

Figure Appendix.A.2: Mathematics Academic Achievement Targets

Student Group	2022-2023 Baseline	2023-2024 Target	2024-2025 Target	2025-2026 Target	2026-2027 Target	2027-2028 Target	2028-2029 Goal
All students	38.2	40.3	42.3	44.4	46.4	48.5	50.6
American Indian or Alaska Native	40.1	42.1	44.1	46.1	48.1	50.1	52.1
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	73.1	74	74.9	75.8	76.7	77.6	78.5
Black or African American	17.9	20.6	23.4	26.1	28.8	31.6	34.3
Economically Disadvantaged Students	19.5	22.2	24.9	27.6	30.2	32.9	35.6
Multilingual Learners	18.1	20.8	23.6	26.3	29	31.8	34.5
Hispanic or Latino	22.2	24.8	27.4	30	32.6	35.2	37.8
Students with Disabilities	15.7	18.5	21.3	24.1	26.9	29.8	32.6
Two or More Races	46.4	48.2	50	51.8	53.5	55.3	57.1
White	48.7	50.4	52.1	53.8	55.5	57.3	59

B. Graduation Rates

Figure Appendix.A.3: Four-Year Graduation Rate Targets

Student Group	2022-2023 Baseline (Cohort 2022)	2023-2024 Target (Cohort 2023)	2024-2025 Target (Cohort 2024)	2025-2026 Target (Cohort 2025)	2026-2027 Target (Cohort 2026)	2027-2028 Target (Cohort 2027)	2028-2029 Goal (Cohort 2028)
All students	85.2	85.6	86	86.5	86.9	87.3	87.7
American Indian or Alaska Native	84.8	85.2	85.7	86.1	86.5	87.0	87.4
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	95.9	95	95	95	95	95	95
Black or African American	77.8	78.5	79.2	80.0	80.7	81.4	82.1
Economically Disadvantaged Students	78.7	79.4	80.1	80.8	81.4	82.1	82.8
Multilingual Learners	70.3	71.3	72.4	73.4	74.4	75.5	76.5
Hispanic or Latino	79.3	80	80.6	81.3	81.9	82.6	83.2
Students with Disabilities	48.5	50.4	52.4	54.3	56.2	58.2	60.1
Two or More Races	84.3	84.8	85.2	85.7	86.1	86.5	87
White	89.1	89.4	89.6	89.9	90.1	90.4	90.6

Figure Appendix.A.4: Five-Year Graduation Rate Targets

Student Group	2023-2024 Baseline (Cohort 2022)	2024-2025 Target (Cohort 2023)	2025-2026 Target (Cohort 2024)	2026-2027 Target (Cohort 2025)	2027-2028 Target (Cohort 2026)	2028-2029 Target (Cohort 2027)	2029-2030 Goal (Cohort 2028)
All students	86.9	87.3	87.7	88.1	88.4	88.8	89.2
American Indian or Alaska Native	86.4	86.8	87.2	87.6	88	88.4	88.8
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	96.6	96	96	96	96	96	96
Black or African American	80.5	81.2	81.8	82.5	83.1	83.8	84.4
Economically Disadvantaged Students	81.2	81.8	82.4	83.1	83.7	84.3	84.9
Multilingual Learners	75.4	76.3	77.1	78	78.9	79.7	80.6
Hispanic or Latino	81.8	82.4	83	83.6	84.2	84.8	85.4
Students with Disabilities	51.4	53.3	55.1	57	58.9	60.7	62.6
Two or More Races	85.9	86.3	86.7	87.2	87.6	88	88.4
White	89.9	90.2	90.4	90.7	90.9	91.2	91.4

Figure Appendix.A.5: Six-Year Graduation Rate Targets

Student Group	2024-2025 Baseline (Cohort 2022)	2025-2026 Target (Cohort 2023)	2026-2027 Target (Cohort 2024)	2027-2028 Target (Cohort 2025)	2028-2029 Target (Cohort 2026)	2029-2030 Target (Cohort 2027)	2030-2031 Goal (Cohort 2028)
All students	87.0	87.4	87.8	88.3	88.7	89.1	89.5
American Indian or Alaska Native	86.4	86.9	87.3	87.8	88.2	88.7	89.1
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	96.6	96.6	96.6	96.7	96.7	96.7	96.7
Black or African American	80.8	81.5	82.2	82.9	83.5	84.2	84.9
Economically Disadvantaged Students	81.4	82.1	82.7	83.4	84.0	84.7	85.3
Multilingual Learners	75.7	76.6	77.5	78.4	79.2	80.1	81.0
Hispanic or Latino	82.1	82.7	83.3	84	84.6	85.2	85.8
Students with Disabilities	51.8	53.7	55.6	57.5	59.3	61.2	63.1
Two or More Races	86.2	86.7	87.1	87.6	88	88.5	88.9
White	90.0	90.3	90.6	90.9	91.2	91.5	91.8

C. Progress in Achieving English Language Proficiency

Figure Appendix.A.6: Progress Toward English Language Proficiency Interim Targets

Group/ Demographic	2022-2023 Baseline	2023-2024 Target	2024-2025 Target	2025-2026 Target	2026-2027 Target	2027-2028 Target	2028-2029 Goal
Statewide Multilingual Learners	28.6%	29.6%	30.6%	31.6%	32.6%	33.6%	34.6%
Schools/LEAs serving up to grade 5	43.0%	44.0%	45.0%	46.0%	47.0%	48.0%	49.0%
Schools/LEAs serving above grade 5	21.7%	22.7%	23.7%	24.7%	25.7%	26.7%	27.7%

Appendix B: General Education Provisions Act (Section 427)

[begin NJDOE response]

The NJDOE remains committed to providing students equitable access to and participation in educational programs in accordance with state and federal civil rights protections, including section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA). Section 427 of GEPA aligns with NJDOE’s commitment to ensure all students are provided a high-quality education.

In New Jersey, all districts that implement ESSA programs must also comply with N.J.A.C. 6A:7, Managing for Equity in Education. These regulations ensure that all students “are provided equal access to educational activities and programs by district boards of education.”

Under N.J.A.C. 6A:7, each LEA must develop and submit to the NJDOE a comprehensive equity plan every three years. The comprehensive equity plan must identify and correct all discriminatory and inequitable educational practices affecting the LEA’s facilities, programs, students, and staff. The regulations also require LEAs, before developing their comprehensive equity plans, to assess their needs for achieving equity in educational programs in terms of content and access.

The NJDOE will identify whether barriers may prevent students, teachers, etc., from such access or participation in federally-funded projects or activities and will take the necessary steps to overcome barriers to equitable access to all federally funded programs included here. Such steps will include, but are not limited to:

1. Ensuring LEA compliance with section 427 of the GEPA for all federally funded programs and with state regulations regarding equity;
2. Ensuring ESSA-related educational materials are accessible to individuals with disabilities and multilingual learners (including translating material, when appropriate); and
3. Providing guidance and technical assistance to ensure LEAs elicit stakeholder input on student needs and federally-funded programs to address those needs from traditionally underrepresented populations, including parents and families of students with disabilities, multilingual learners, and economically disadvantaged students.

In accordance with section 427 of the GEPA, the NJDOE will continue to ensure compliance with these regulations as they pertain to all locally developed educational programs, including those under ESSA.

Appendix C: Text Versions of Diagrams

NJ ESSA State Plan Timeline

1. 2015: ESSA Becomes Law
2. 2017: NJ ESSA State Plan Approved
3. 2019: ESSA Comprehensive Monitoring
4. 2021: COVID Addendum
5. 2023: Redlined Version Approved
6. 2024: NJ ESSA State Plan Revised

[Back to section after timeline \(Meaningful Consultation\)](#)

The Continuous Improvement Cycle

Evidence-based Decision Making

- **Select:** Identify, examine, and select interventions.
- **Plan:** Develop implementation strategies.
- **Implement:** Proceed with interventions, make formative adjustments.
- **Analyze:** Conduct summative assessment of performance and effectiveness.
- **Inform:** Analyze local needs, adjust focus.

[Back to Recruitment and Retention of Diverse Educator Workforce section](#)

[Back to section after Service Delivery Plan \(Parent Input into the Service Delivery Plan\)](#)

Iceberg Data Analogy

The diagram shows an iceberg from the side. There is a small section above the waterline (tip of the iceberg) and a much larger section below the waterline.

- **Section above the waterline:** Data used to identify schools for comprehensive or targeted support
- **Section below the waterline:** Data needed to understand the specific needs of students, identify root causes of performance gaps, evaluate effectiveness of educational practices, etc.

[Back to paragraph after Iceberg Diagram](#)

Appendix D: External Stakeholder Engagement

Introduction

Throughout 2023 and 2024, the NJDOE consulted with cross-agency staff, researchers, and New Jersey stakeholders. The main changes to the plan were reviewed and discussed with various NJDOE focus groups and the ESSA Stakeholder Working Group. Over 50 New Jersey organizations were represented in the ESSA Stakeholder Working Group, which met for five sessions between January and March of 2024 to discuss and provide feedback on the various proposals. Part I of this Appendix describes the discussion topics and feedback the NJDOE received by the attendees of the meeting as well as a list of organizations accepted the invitation to join the ESSA Stakeholder Working Group.

Throughout August, 2024, the NJDOE posted the draft 2024 ESSA State Plan in its entirety online. Through a public broadcast memo and a press release, members of the public, including educators and community members in every school and district in New Jersey, were invited to review the draft State Plan and email comments to the NJDOE. Short information sheets were posted in Spanish and English. ESSA Stakeholder Working Group members were encouraged to share the draft with the thousands of organization members they collectively represented. Part II of this Appendix summarizes the public input received.

Beginning in the fall of 2023, the NJDOE updated the Advisory Committee for Federally Funded Programs (ACFFP) and sought feedback throughout the drafting process during the spring and summer of 2024. This committee includes administrators, teachers from traditional public schools and charter schools, principals, other school leaders, parents, members of local boards of education, specialized instructional support personnel, paraprofessionals, representatives of nonpublic school children, and charter school leaders. They meet with the NJDOE periodically to discuss changes to and the implementation of various federally funded programs in New Jersey. Members of this committee reviewed drafts of the 2024 ESSA State Plan before and during the public comment period.

The NJDOE also sent email notifications regarding the opportunity for public comment to LEA leadership listservs, including over 1,400 administrators and school staff such as coordinators of federal programs and business administrators.

The NJDOE staff is extremely grateful to the many stakeholders—internal and external to the NJDOE—who provided valuable insight and expertise into this process. The excellent feedback received has led to and will continue to lead to NJDOE’s policies, practices, and implementation so that all students in New Jersey have equitable access to high-quality education.

Part I

Part I of this appendix provides high-level responses to the proposals presented at each of the five 2024 ESSA Stakeholder Working Group sessions. Feedback was provided through virtual and in-person conversations, and surveys were issued at the end of each session. Each meeting was attended by approximately 40–60 attendees, and small group discussions between 5–10 individuals were facilitated by a designated NJDOE staff notetaker. As conversations were fluid with opportunities for questions and responses, the notes below include real-time wonderings and reactions to the policies and the NJDOE’s process. Overall, stakeholders reacted favorably to all substantive proposed changes reflected in the 2024

ESSA State Plan. Questions regarding this summary or the engagement process can be directed to the NJDOE ESSA Team at essa@doe.nj.gov.

Topics of Proposals Discussed:

1. [Long-Term Goals and Interim Targets](#)
2. [Graduation Rate](#)
3. [Academic Achievement](#)
4. [English Language Proficiency Indicator \(Research\)](#)
5. [Equitable Access to High-Quality Teaching \(Definitions\)](#)
6. [School Quality Student Success Indicators](#)
7. [Expansion of New Jersey Tiered Systems of Success](#)
8. [Assessment Translations](#)

Feedback on the Long-Term Goals and Targets Proposal Session #1 (Jan. 30)

Participants provided initial reactions to the proposal aiming to redefine the long-term goals and targets of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and adjust the target status categories.

Stakeholder Feedback

Question 1: Benefits and Concerns

What are the benefits of the proposal? What are some concerns?

Responses

Benefits:

- Encourages a realistic and adaptive approach to setting educational goals post-COVID.
- Advocates for tailored accountability measures and flexible benchmarks.
- Ensures interventions are effective and inclusive of all student demographics.
- Emphasizes reassessing support levels and requirements for school district plans.
- Commitment to achievable growth and recognizing diverse student needs.
- Promotes effective and inclusive interventions, particularly benefiting students with disabilities.
- Revisiting targets every 5 years may provide several benefits.
- Focus on growth and continuous improvement — "it's not a straight line."
- These changes just make sense!
- Benefits to revisiting goals often. Provides an opportunity for schools to improve and document changes.

- Charting growth of separate cohorts such as students with disabilities, multilingual learners, transient students, etc., allows for targeted support and provides a more nuanced understanding of progress.
- Supports targeted to the most vulnerable student groups.
- Percentages adjusted by student groups for more effective targeting.
- The proposed changes are gap-focused, providing a more targeted and effective approach for addressing disparities in achievement.

Concerns:

- Concerns about focusing on significantly low student groups over higher-performing groups.
- Needs more strategic changes tailored to specific student groups.
- Questions about low thresholds of baseline numbers and the effectiveness of a 95 percent goal.
- Suggestion for a higher minimum tier for intervention to ensure all students receive the necessary support.
- Skepticism about ambitious benchmarks without clear knowledge of post-COVID standings.
- Concerns about the feasibility of reducing proficiency rates and level of state support.
- Emphasis on tailored accountability measures and flexible benchmarks.
- Highlighting a diverse student population may not be adequately served under uniform goals.
- Necessity of reassessing support levels and requirements for different school districts.
- Skepticism about whether the proposed changes would be effective in addressing longstanding problems, indicating a need for a different approach. Emphasizing the importance of leadership, evaluation of the system for teachers and supervisors, and implementation of professional learning supports.
- Concerns about whether 5 years is enough to reduce the achievement gap by 25 percent.
- Suggestion to aim for a 10 percent reduction in 5 years instead.
- Uncertainty about graduation rates improvement without inclusion rate improvement.
- Concerns about the impact of proposed changes on special education student groups.

Question 2: Are these still ambitious with annual targets?

Responses

- If districts are exceeding targets, no concern is raised; however, interventions are suggested for underperforming districts.
- Questions about the rationale behind maintaining the 5-year goal without adjustment.
- Concerns regarding ways the effectiveness of interventions to improve performance is measured and evaluated.
- Questions about the ambition of annual targets and the benefits of adjusting goals in the interim.

- Questions about the criteria for schools to qualify for additional support if they meet adjusted goals.
- Concerns about whether schools will still need support if they achieve the adjusted goal but fall below the baseline.
- Adjusting the trajectories for targets was seen as making more sense and being more achievable to prevent setting schools up for failure.
- Emphasis on the importance of having a clear path to achieve goals, highlighting that setting goals is just the beginning, and that development and accountability are crucial for success.
- Agreement that goals should be based on available data, with a focus on evidence-based student growth, particularly supporting the 25 percent target.
- Current goals are more palatable and realistic compared to previous ESSA goals.
- Questions about the validity and accuracy of the data and studies supporting the initiative, skepticism towards standardized testing.
- Concerns about focusing more on the school system than on individual students, noting the variability of student groups each year. Suggestions to consider the cohort model for a more comprehensive approach.
- The proposal aligns with several districts' strategic plans, providing insight into current school activities.
- Emphasis is placed on the importance of implementation for success.
- Expresses concern about the possibility of schools not meeting targets and the potential need to intensify efforts to achieve long-term goals.
- Believes that the targets are ambiguous, emphasizing the need to consider multiple factors when setting annual goals.
- Expresses skepticism about the likelihood of ever reaching the overall target goal.

Key Feedback Points on Long-Term Goals and Targets Proposal

Responses

- Desire for more data, specifically pre/post data from schools working with the NJDOE, especially regarding placement data for students with disabilities.
- Appreciation for the efficiency and clarity of the presentation.
- Recognition of the significant considerations being made to enhance needs from the previous state plan.
- Advocacy for building flexibility into targets to adapt to changing circumstances.
- Acknowledgment of ambitious goals and substantial work ahead.
- Confidence in the process and progress. “We’re on the right track”.
- Acknowledges and the importance of collaboration between educational community members and the state for open discussions and information sharing.

- Appreciation for the NJDOE's responsiveness to field concerns and the critical differentiation of goals for true reform.
- Recognition of the complexity of setting achievable goals and the need for thorough discussion.
- Understanding the complexity of ESSA and the various components involved.
- Gratitude for the opportunity to work with dedicated educators focused on improving outcomes for all students.
- Feedback on the need for more time for processing information and deeper exploration in group discussions.
- Importance of clarity in stakeholder roles and objectives.
- Emphasis on identifying necessary metrics for student and district success through discussion.
- Advocacy for more comprehensive criteria for evaluating schools beyond broad federal requirements.
- Positive experience collaborating with education professionals at NJDOE, with clear presentations and valuable feedback on current state policies informing decision-making.
- Request for additional resources, both financial and personnel, to support accountability outcomes.
- Recognition of the substantial work ahead and appreciation for the review of progress during the meeting.

Major Themes and Takeaways from Session

Need for More Data and Time

Stakeholders expressed a need for both more comprehensive data, such as pre/post data and school evaluation criteria, and additional time for in-depth discussions and information processing.

Positive Feelings and Collaboration

Positive sentiments were shared regarding the efficiency of the presentation and collaboration with dedicated education professionals. There was an emphasis on the importance of collaboration between stakeholders and the state for information sharing and opportunities to engage in deeper discussions.

Acknowledgment of Ambitious Goals and Work Ahead

Stakeholders acknowledged the ambitious goals and the substantial work ahead, expressing confidence in the progress being made towards achieving these goals.

Feedback on the Graduation Rate Proposal

Session #2 (Feb. 6)

Stakeholders provided initial reactions to the graduation rate proposal to use both the six-year and five-year adjusted cohort graduation rate as indicators for the extended cohort graduation rate.

Stakeholder Feedback

Question 1: Does this proposal align with our Key Principles of Accountability?

Response

- This proposal aligns with principles 1, 2, and 4 well. As for principle 3, its alignment should be evaluated following implementation.
- Yes, it absolutely aligns as it provides the NJDOE with more information to deliver specific support.
- It could afford high schools a broader view of the assistance they're giving students; more data generally equates to improved outcomes.
- We support adding the five to six-year cohort [this would also] reflect the transitions of special education and SIFE (Students with Interrupted Formal Education) students.
- We would need additional data before fully committing to a stance on this proposal.

Question 2: Benefits and Concerns

What are the benefits of the proposal? What are some concerns?

Response

Benefits:

- The proposal could extend recognition to schools for supporting students who need more time to graduate, which aligns with principles of equity by valuing grit and perseverance.
- The proposal is an accountability measure that can increase inclusivity, potentially leading to a greater ability for all students to be acknowledged and supported.

Concerns:

- The proposal raises questions about the rationale behind differentiating graduation times (e.g., why five years may be deemed more favorable than six).
- There are potential implications for students with disabilities, emphasizing the need for equitable treatment and consistent application of strategies to ensure those with the greatest needs receive proper attention and support.

Key Feedback Points on the Graduation Rate Proposal

- Support for measuring Year 6 graduates for greater accountability.
- Suggestion to move to a 5/6-year model to include SLIFE students (interrupted learning)
- Question about including 6-year graduation rates in future reports.

- Inquiry about collecting graduation rates beyond 6 years to capture the entire special needs population.

Feedback on the Academic Achievement Proposal

Session #2 (Feb. 6)

Stakeholders provided feedback on the academic achievement proposal aiming to explore an index-based measure of proficiency for the academic achievement indicator.

Stakeholder Feedback

Question 1: Benefits and Concerns

What are the benefits of the index-model? What are the concerns? What additional information would be helpful to considering this proposal?

Responses

Benefits:

- Similar to what is used for charter school accountability; the index-model introduces efficiency in targeted interventions, with a nuanced approach providing a clearer picture of student performance levels. Adopting a tiered support system may provide a spectrum of assistance tailored to varying school needs.
- Value in crediting schools for student growth, distinguishing between schools in desperate need of help, and those who could benefit from specific resources. This could combat educational inequities by identifying and addressing opportunity gaps.
- This approach makes sense to me.

Concerns:

- Uncertainty about the index-data addressing root causes of educational inequalities. The potential stigma for students identified for extra support also raises questions about the emotional impact on students.
- The implications for the population of students with disabilities are not fully understood. There is a call for accountability measures that ensure consistent application of support strategies to serve the students who need them the most.
- Funding stability is a major concern, with anxieties surrounding the reliability of state and federal support, and how funding changes might impact the index and educational outcomes overall.

Key Feedback Points on Academic Achievement (Index-Based) Proficiency Model Proposal

Responses

- Curious about what reporting on the index model could look like for it to meaningfully inform school and district choices.
- Discuss rollouts and information with the public to make it understandable.
- Appears to be a better way to see what's happening in districts.
- The index gives a much better idea of what is happening in a school rather than just listing the % proficient.

- Request to keep traditional proficiency metrics on report cards in addition to new metrics.
- The index validates the underlying data almost like standard deviation does in statistics.

Major Themes and Takeaways from Session

- Emphasis on the importance of data-driven decision-making, especially in evaluating the impact of initiatives on student outcomes.
- Recognition of the need for flexibility in goal setting to adapt to changing circumstances and district needs.
- Collaboration and communication between educational stakeholders and the state for effective policy implementation.
- Acknowledgment of the complexity of setting achievable goals and targets while considering various factors.
- Appreciation for the efforts and dedication of educators in improving outcomes for all students.
- Calls for more comprehensive and nuanced criteria for evaluating schools beyond the broad federal requirements.
- Requests for additional resources and support to help achieve accountability outcomes.
- Focus on understanding stakeholder roles and clear objectives in the decision-making process.
- Discussion on the challenges and complexities of implementing ESSA.
- Overall, a sense of hope/ambition and determination to drive positive change in education despite the challenges ahead.

Feedback on the English Language Proficiency Indicator Progress Proposal Session #3 (Feb. 13)

Participants provided initial reactions to the proposal to explore alternate ways to measure progress in achieving English Language Proficiency.

Stakeholder Feedback

Question 1: Does this proposal align to our key principles of accountability?

Responses

- Are we looking at models in the context and respect to NJ diverse students?
- What schools are being identified?
- This seems like a small framework. What support is being provided?
- How are the districts going to be identified? What is the process and the metrics used?
- The linear growth model makes intuitive sense, but it may not account for the fact that younger students can make more progress.
- The comparison to other states' growth models is unclear. Learning is not linear, so the end goal should be prioritized with flexible pathways to achieve it.
- Consider the diversity of students, including those from different countries with varying educational backgrounds.

Question 2: Benefits and Concerns

What are the benefits of the proposal? What are some concerns?

Responses

Benefits:

- Highlights the need to address environmental factors impacting student success, such as food insecurity and homelessness.
- Suggests the exploration of dual language programs for early childhood years as these years can build primary language proficiency for improved content language and literacy.
- Reiterates the inclusion of additional factors in the proposal and maintenance of flexibility and acknowledges the consideration for students with interrupted learning processes who may require more time to achieve proficiency.
- Emphasizes the importance of further exploration of alternative growth measures and in-depth discussion before reaching final conclusions.

Concerns:

- Outside factors may hinder some students from achieving success despite the proposal's efforts.
- Low 4.5 cut-off score for exiting ESL/bilingual programs may lead to premature exits before students achieve sufficient English proficiency.
 - Complexity of Access for ELLs assessment may not align with the low exit score.
 - Potential impact on students' eligibility for the Seal of Biliteracy and retention of their original language.
- Discrepancy between the term "multilingual" and the NJDOE's definition of English learners.

Key Feedback Points on English Language Proficiency Indicator Proposal

Responses

- Priority on increasing the number of multilingual students and the importance of language proficiency for all learners in the context of the future economy.
- Emphasis on the need for a thorough review and deeper consideration of the proposal.
- Importance of ensuring adequate support for addressing mental health and social and emotional wellness to promote the success of learners.
- Concerns about the impact on students with disabilities and English learners, questioning the fairness, accuracy, and equity of the proposed measurement.
- Request for a more nuanced approach and clarification on the proficiency level represented by the 4.5 score in the assessment.
- Consideration for new students struggling with language adjustment and the complexity of the ACCESS for ELLs assessment.
- Suggestions to raise the cut-off score to 5 for English language proficiency assessment to align with other states.
- Concerns about supporting both young and older learners effectively and preventing older learners from being left without continued assistance.
- Appreciation for exploring growth opportunities and the interplay between multilingual learners and dual language/bilingual programs for enhanced learning outcomes.

Feedback on the Equitable Access to High-Quality Teaching (Educator Equity) Proposal

Session #3 (Feb. 13)

Participants provided initial reactions to the proposal to redefine the current definition of an inexperienced teacher and to revisit the calculation used to determine the rate at which students are taught by inexperienced teachers.

Stakeholder Feedback

Question 1: Equitable Access

Will this proposal better enable NJDOE and stakeholders to evaluate whether students in all student groups have equitable access to experienced educators?

Responses

- The potential misconception that inexperience equates to ineffectiveness, urging the need for clarification.
- Questions regarding the definition of experience were raised, examining whether it pertains solely to tenure or includes other facets of professional growth.
- The contribution of paraprofessionals was underscored, especially those with extensive experience, asking where their tenure figures into the equation.
- Proposal is a step forward; however, cautioning that it might not fully realize the intended goal.
- The definition of experience proposed might represent a provisional measure, rather than a comprehensive solution.
- Suggestions were made to focus this measure on core curriculum teachers, who have more frequent interactions with students, rather than specialists like physical education teachers, whose impact is less continual.
- Agree with the proposed changes to the definition of inexperienced teacher/educator.
- Adjusting the impact score of a teacher based on the proportional time they spend with students throughout the day.
- Nursing staff also parallel this discussion in terms of the significance of experience, especially related to student health and absenteeism on a national level.
- The significance of grade levels was noted, particularly in contrasting how students interact with multiple educators in middle and high school environments versus the more singular teacher relationships at the elementary level.
- Replace 'inexperienced' with 'novice', suggesting a more nuanced term that may better represent the developmental stage of a teacher's career.

Question 2: Benefits and Concerns

What are the benefits of the proposal? What are some concerns?

Responses

Benefits:

- Potential for a more nuanced understanding of teacher impact on student success beyond test scores.
- To address equity concerns, it is important to determine whether students of color are disproportionately taught by inexperienced teachers. Examining this aspect may provide insights into potential disparities.
- Removal of the restriction "within a given LEA" to increase flexibility.
- Teachers can change districts to address teacher shortages.
- Reevaluation of data calculation considering teacher transitions post-pandemic.
- Comprehensive analysis of subject areas for high school/middle school and core subjects for elementary school related to teacher experience.
- There is a desire to know more information about teacher experience but a concern about sharing it with the federal government.

Concerns:

- Potential for a more nuanced understanding of teacher impact on student success beyond test scores, paving the way for more comprehensive evaluations.
- Potential for mapping precise teacher development paths, allowing for targeted professional support to promote growth in specific areas.
- Additionally, the notion of removing "within a given LEA" from the measurements could lead to a more equitable distribution of experienced teachers across districts, addressing teacher mobility and shortages.

Key Feedback Points on the Educator Equity Metrics Proposal

Responses

- Concern about the term "inexperienced" being misleading and caution against equating it directly with effectiveness.
- Query about whether principals serving as teachers in classes without designated educators are classified as experienced.
- Support for the proposed changes.
- Interest in redefining "inexperience" beyond just time-based criteria, emphasizing the need for data-driven definitions to support school leaders in developing effective teachers for student success.
- Acknowledgment of the importance of examining how one inexperienced educator impacts student data when students have multiple teachers with varying experience levels.

- Emphasis on the need for more detailed teacher metrics and data sharing, suggesting a comprehensive review of available information before introducing further legislation.
- Request for additional information comparing teacher experience with advanced degrees.
- “We need a brainstorming session to explore other possibilities.”
- “Will the substitute teacher experience be counted as experience per the federal/state definition?”
- “Experienced teachers switching districts should not be labeled as inexperienced.”
- “The proposed changes look good.”

Major Themes and Takeaways from Session

- **Redefining "Inexperience":** Stakeholders unanimously expressed interest in redefining "inexperience" using data-driven definitions.
- **Impact on Effectiveness:** Stakeholders delved into the potentially misleading nature of the term "inexperienced" and discussed concerns about the definition of "inexperienced" and its implications on teacher effectiveness.
- **Experience of Principals:** The classification of principals as experienced teachers when serving as educators sparked discussion on their unique role and experience.
- **Transfer of Experienced Teachers:** The issue of experienced teachers switching districts and being labeled as inexperienced was highlighted as a point of contention.
- **Student Data Impact:** The impact of one inexperienced educator on student data within classrooms with multiple teachers was emphasized as a consideration.
- **Comprehensive Metrics and Data Sharing:** The need for detailed teacher metrics and data sharing before implementing new legislation was reiterated.

Appreciation for Exploring Alternative Approaches Acknowledgment that the NJDOE is exploring different models beyond the linear model currently in use.

Feedback on the Proposal to Add “High School Persistence” as School Quality/Success Indicator

Session #4- (Mar. 12)

Participants will provide initial reactions to the proposal to add a second School Quality/Student Success Indicator, “High School Persistence,” to New Jersey’s ESSA accountability system.

Stakeholder Feedback

Question 1: Why do you think attendance matters?

Responses

- Individual presence is crucial for learning. When students feel supported, they are more likely to attend school regularly. Implementing more support systems can contribute to a positive school climate, resulting in higher attendance rates.
- Raises questions about the role of busing as part of the support system for attendance, particularly in relation to the 2-mile factor. Considers whether the availability of busing influences the level of support within the school.
- Parental engagement is a key factor in improving attendance rates. Increased parental involvement has been shown to positively impact students' attendance.
- Highlights the importance of providing critical support to ensure students feel safe in school, especially when they are experiencing a range of emotions and feelings for various reasons.
- Emphasizes the critical role of relationships with peers and teachers in children's social development and problem-solving skills from birth to 3rd grade.
- Advocates for increased access to services and resources, including multi-tiered supports, to effectively tackle absenteeism.
- Questions about the level of engagement in academic material and whether it can be used to motivate regular student attendance.
- Explores the impact of chronic absenteeism on high-achieving students and its effects on their academic performance.
- Considers the interplay between a student's disability, engagement levels, and absenteeism patterns.
- Highlights the necessity of personalized approaches in addressing chronic absenteeism, arguing against a one-size-fits-all strategy. Recommends tailored corrective action plans, illustrated by a case of a high-achieving student at risk of failure due to absenteeism.
- Advocates for a shift from strict, punitive measures to a more nuanced approach in addressing chronic absenteeism.
- Explores various methods for evaluating and prioritizing interventions for absenteeism.

- Stresses the significance of appropriate academic placement, particularly for high-achieving students who may require greater challenges. Proposes a multi-tiered framework for examining absenteeism.
- Considers whether absenteeism rates differ among students with varying academic performance levels.
- Students who are absent miss crucial concepts and content, making it challenging to catch up.
- This challenge is particularly pronounced in certain subjects, such as math.
- Absences can lead to social consequences, including anxiety, especially for college-bound students who may feel pressure and risk not graduating.
- Defining what constitutes an absence is a key implementation issue, and local perspectives on data reporting vary.
- Academic struggles often go hand in hand with attendance issues.
- There is a growing trend of more children staying home from school.
- Determining when staying home due to illness is warranted and how to address excessive absences with families poses challenges.
- Poor attendance complicates the process of determining eligibility for special education services.
- In tutoring programs, missing out-of-school time, such as early pick-ups and summer sessions, hinders student progress and sets them back academically.
- Provides clear and focused insights into identifying underlying issues, especially concerning students and families.
- Stresses the significance of uncovering root causes to tackle attendance challenges successfully.
- Poses a critical question: How can solutions be implemented without thoroughly understanding the root causes?
- Recognizes a difference in attendance issues between grades preschool – 8 and high school.
- Attendance is crucial for a student's academic success, with parental support being essential.
- Some families may need to withdraw their children for religious observances not aligned with the school calendar.
- Addressing chronic absenteeism is vital to ensure all students are consistently engaged in learning.
- Factors like juggling multiple jobs and morning routines can contribute to school absences, underscoring the need for parental resources.
- Collaboration with parents, schools, and community programs is key to enhancing attendance rates and meeting students' needs.
- Drawing insights from successful models and districts can provide valuable strategies for promoting attendance.
- Attendance Works offers resources and expertise in addressing chronic absenteeism.

Question 2: IEP Exemptions

Does this proposed measure address the concern that the graduation rate does not include students graduating through IEP exemptions?

Responses

- Moving closer to alignment with State graduation policies.
- Positive agreement with the measure, bringing stakeholders closer together.
- Appreciation for the rebranding efforts, noting that elementary schools may lay the groundwork for addressing chronic absenteeism.
- Inquiry into whether external factors affecting the "percentage" are being considered.
- Recognition of the usefulness of resources explaining indicators, suggesting that each indicator should be accompanied by a resource.
- Suggestions for districts to utilize tools to clarify indicators for better understanding.
- Emphasis on the understanding that chronic absenteeism impacts students' futures, prompting consideration of addressing the issue starting at the elementary school level.
- Questioning whether systemic issues unique to each district are being considered, as different schools may face undisclosed systemic challenges.
- Concern about potential unintended consequences that may hinder addressing chronic absenteeism.
- Disapproval of the current practice of waiting until high school to address absenteeism, suggesting that this delay could contribute to the problem.
- Questions the role of individual schools considered as a district, particularly regional high schools that enroll students from multiple surrounding districts and proposing that starting interventions in elementary school might be more effective.
- Positive feedback on the rebranding efforts related to the measure.
- Expresses uncertainty about how the proposed will measure and specifically addresses the needs of students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).
- Raises concerns about how the inclusion of students graduating through IEP exemptions will be reflected on performance reports.
- Raises concerns about the potential impact on student mobility, particularly for students with IEPs who may be transitioning between schools, moving out of the district, or transferring to specialized schools.
- Considers the potential implications of implementing a "penalty" for students with IEPs and questions if this aligns with the purpose of ESSA in providing additional resources.
- Examines the connection between the measure and resource allocation, questioning whether the increase in percentage translates to enhanced resources and whether these resources are ultimately beneficial or harmful.
- Advocates for utilizing multiple measures instead of relying solely on one metric, prompting a discussion on the suitability of the proposed measure.

- Inquiries about previous implementations of similar measures in other states and the lessons that can be learned from those experiences.
- Suggests starting with a 0 percent weight for the metric initially and outlines a timeline for gradually phasing it in over two years if proven effective.
- Supports labeling the metric with a positive descriptor such as "persistence" to highlight its intended focus on student progress and continuity.
- Disagrees with the assertion that the proposed measure adequately addresses the concern for multilingual learners as they are still not accounted for in graduation reporting.
- Acknowledges that the measure captures students who graduate but cannot be counted in federal reporting.
- Raises a question about whether the measure accurately reflects what students are doing after remaining in school, particularly in cases where students may be aging out rather than graduating.
- Notes that the measure addresses certain concerns but expresses unfamiliarity with how it specifically relates to students with IEPs.

Question 3: Metric

Do you see this metric being useful in an accountability system? Why or why not?

Responses

- Appreciates the significant shift from a negative connotation like chronic absenteeism to a more positive one like persistence.
- Gives an example of how the metric can provide a more comprehensive view of student experiences, such as students arriving in senior year after being in other programs.
- Advocates for reporting positive indicators intentionally to paint a holistic picture of student achievement and progress.
- The metric is “useful and logical.”
- Recognizes that the metric indicates a student's interest in completing a program.
- Emphasizes that students being able to continue their education can incentivize districts to promote and sustain student engagement in school.
- Acknowledges that the metric can be helpful but emphasizes the importance of specificity regarding the types of absences being measured.
- Appreciates the flexibility of the metric in addressing special cases and values the thoughtful approach that went into its development.
- Highlights the critical role of communication in ensuring that parents understand the concept of chronic absenteeism and its impact, especially in situations involving students with IEPs.
- Raises a question on how the metric can be used to identify schools in need of additional support.

Question 4: Indicator Weights

Considering our current weighting structure, what would you consider an appropriate way to adjust the indicator weights? Do you foresee any issues in readjusting indicator weights?

Responses

- Splitting the weight amongst indicators would diminish their individual impacts.
- Considering the graduation rate is already divided, should we exclude data from the 5- and 6-year extended rates? Further simulations will be conducted to explore this.
- Is it feasible to redistribute weight from graduation rate and chronic absenteeism?
- Could chronic absenteeism be integrated into the persistence metric? How does chronic absenteeism affect the extended graduation rate?

Key Feedback Points on the School Quality/Student Success (Student Persistence) Proposal

Responses

- “I do not have any outstanding questions”.
- “I am concerned that students with disabilities may be perceived as negatively impacting their school's "report card" based on ESSA indicators.”
- I have no additional feedback to share at this time.
- “It is crucial to consider metrics that empower students rather than penalize them. I appreciate the efforts and discussions aimed at supporting students in the best possible way.”
- The additional indicators aim to acknowledge the hard work of schools where federal guidance may be lacking.
- “I believe that weighted adjustment example #2 is the most effective option”.

Feedback on the New Jersey Tiered System of Supports (NJTSS) Proposal Session #4–5 (Mar. 12 & 19)

Participants provided initial reactions to the New Jersey Tiered System of Supports (NJTSS) proposal.

Stakeholder Feedback

Question 1: Experience with NJTSS

What experience do you have with the New Jersey Tiered System of Supports (NJTSS)? What does this mean to you?

Responses

- Stakeholder responses to NJTSS were overwhelmingly positive, with unanimous agreement on the reception of the updates.
- A key question for future discussion is identifying the specific information from the progress and growth in NJTSS that can be included as positive reinforcement in school performance reports.

Question 2: Communication

How can we improve communication about the NJTSS Initiative and ensure it reaches your organizations?

Responses

- The NJTSS provides valuable links to early literacy resources, making it a treasure trove. It should be prominently featured on the NJDOE website and made more user-friendly with guiding questions like "Here is where..."
- Collaboration with organizations for professional development is crucial.
- We must incorporate a parental perspective as the information is currently more accessible to educators than parents. Parents play a vital role in ensuring tiered support is effectively implemented. It is essential to communicate with PTAs and families in layman's terms to increase understanding.
- Concerns arise about multilingual learners not receiving adequate support for various reasons, including perceptions about appropriate referrals.
- There is a growing number of students with limited/interrupted education in New Jersey, requiring a more hands-on approach to their education.
- Leadership with professional knowledge on this issue is essential to implement a structured and coordinated effort.
- It is crucial for this model to have support from top-level leadership for successful implementation.
- Questions arise about the number of districts using tiered systems as it is not mandatory, leading to challenges in data collection. Some districts are implementing early reading projects with universal screening instruments like DIBELS.

- Professional learning opportunities, such as Level 2 support and presentations at conferences and summits, along with online resources, are available.
- Some districts are using Response to Intervention (RTI), but there is limited awareness about other districts using it.
- Emphasis is placed on the need for professional development to effectively disseminate information.
- Building buy-in is crucial to drive the agenda forward, and community forums can help bring schools and parents together.
- Regularly scheduled parent learning sessions are essential. Efforts are being made to involve the parent organizations system in advocating for the initiative within local districts, despite the complexity of the system requiring trust from parents.
- It is crucial to clarify to districts that NJTSS is utilized in both general and special education settings and demonstrate how it can be applied to both. Explaining the intersection with Intervention and Referral Services (IR&S) and providing examples of when different tiers are applicable would be beneficial.
- While the NJDOE has set ambitious goals, there is a need to ensure alignment with student goals. Collaboration with groups like the NJ Council on Developmental Disabilities can help provide necessary support to push students towards improvement.
- Schools play a significant role in addressing chronic absenteeism within communities, considering the various social determinants involved.
- The PRISE should encompass NJTSS and stakeholder engagement is crucial for obtaining buy-in.
- It is essential to identify which staff members are involved in NJTSS implementation. Clarifying the roles of general education teachers versus social workers is important.
- Exploring best practices to incentivize student attendance, such as linking academic requirements for activities like sports, can be beneficial.
- The website shared during the virtual webinar is comprehensive but lacks specific New Jersey branding. Efforts should be made to engage Executive County Superintendents (ECS) to understand the importance, value, and functionality of the website. Transitioning from passive updates to active engagement with ECSs can leverage their leadership effectively.
- Parents' access to NJTSS and Intervention and Referral Services (I&RS) needs to be clarified, especially in cases where LEAs have misinformation about implementation responsibilities.
- Identifying available community supports as part of the support cadre is essential.
- Communication strategies for parents about NJTSS, including the possibility of a public campaign and leveraging social media, should be explored.
- Concerns regarding the 5–7 years of implementation should be addressed, including anecdotes from the initial years where LEAs may have faced challenges like pulling literacy coaches. Setting realistic expectations and timelines for NJTSS implementation is crucial.
- Exploring asynchronous learning opportunities for teachers, parents, and families is essential to ensure comprehensive engagement with the initiative.

- Drawing a comparison to "Trickled Down Economics," it is important to share success stories from exemplary school districts as a valuable learning opportunity.
- Building capacity and allocating funding to support NJTSS is essential for its successful implementation.
- Ensuring buy-in from district and school leaders is crucial for effectively adopting NJTSS.
- Bridging the gap between the SEA and classroom teachers is vital for effective communication and implementation.
- It is important to address concerns from educators who question the feasibility of NJTSS due to limited resources and the reduction of reading specialists.
- Clarifying the differences between NJTSS and I&RS and addressing challenges like extra paperwork and self-reporting is necessary.
- It is crucial to develop a campaign to promote NJTSS, starting with classroom teachers and moving up, and creating tools and resources for dissemination.
- Partnering with colleges and Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) for teacher development and creating ambassadors can enhance the implementation of NJTSS.
- General comment: Difficulty navigating the ESSA plan due to the lack of a table of contents highlights the need for better organization and accessibility of information.
- Concerns were raised about the distribution of information, including mental health and positive behavioral support resources, and the availability of the manual for districts.
- Challenges with the state website's navigation and finding specific information were noted, suggesting the need for improved website design and content organization.
- Emphasis on the importance of clear communication and ensuring information reaches all stakeholders effectively was highlighted.
- The interconnected nature of initiatives like NJTSS and I & RS was underscored, emphasizing the need for improved systems to support student success.
- Communication efforts should utilize everyday language to ensure understanding among parents and stakeholders.
- Highlights the need for dedicated personnel for mental health and positive behavioral supports, as well as speech pathologists, for effective implementation.
- Suggestions to promote information through various channels, including conferences and publications, and in multiple languages like Spanish and Creole to reach diverse audiences.
- Collaboration with other groups and organizations for the promotion and dissemination of information was recommended to enhance outreach efforts.

Key Feedback Points on the Explanation of New Jersey Tiered System of Supports

Responses

- Enthusiastic response: "LOVED IT!"

- Query regarding terminology: Is calling it NJTSS instead of MTSS necessary? Are we really all that different?
- Interest in learning more about NJTSS, highlighting its importance.
- Suggestion to include out-of-school time and community resources in support of a holistic student experience.
- Inquiry about NJDOE's monitoring of districts to ensure the provision of tiered systems of support for students.
- NJTSS should be prominently featured on the NJDOE website to provide easy access to valuable early literacy resources.
- Collaboration with organizations like NJASCD for professional development is crucial to enhance the effectiveness of NJTSS implementation.
- Incorporating a parental perspective is essential to ensure that tiered support is effectively implemented, recognizing parents' vital role in the process.
- Addressing concerns about multilingual learners not receiving adequate support within the NJTSS framework is important for equitable educational opportunities.
- Leadership with professional knowledge of diverse student needs is necessary for a structured and coordinated effort in implementing NJTSS.
- “Top-level” leadership support is critical for the successful implementation of NJTSS across districts to drive systemic change.
- Clarification on how NJTSS can be applied in both general and special education settings, including its intersection with Intervention and Referral Services (IR&S), is needed for effective implementation.
- Providing professional development opportunities is essential to disseminate information effectively and build buy-in within the education community for NJTSS.
- Collaboration with groups like the NJ Council on Developmental Disabilities can help align student goals with the ambitious objectives set by NJTSS.
- Developing a campaign to promote NJTSS, starting with classroom teachers and moving up the hierarchy, and creating tools and resources for dissemination is crucial to increase awareness and support for NJTSS.

Major Themes and Takeaways from Session

During the discussion on NJTSS progress and the School Quality/Student Success (Student Persistence) proposal, several key themes and takeaways emerged:

- Acknowledgment of the hard work of schools.
- Importance of considering graduation and persistence together.
- Recognition of the need to address chronic absenteeism weights.
- Agreement on the direction and acceptability of essentials with minor differences.
- Approval of the NJDOE presentation.
- Focus on defining chronic absenteeism and High School Persistence Metric.
- Emphasis on the correlation between chronic absenteeism and student success.
- Recognition of the complexity of chronic absenteeism factors.
- Interest in using student persistence as an indicator of success.
- Acknowledgment of the separate importance of Graduation Rate and Persistence Rate.

Feedback on the Assessments Proposal

Session #5 (Mar. 19)

Participants provided initial reactions to the assessment proposal, which aims to remove the county-level criteria for determining languages other than English in which to offer the assessments and establish a working group to review and propose new metrics.

Stakeholder Feedback

Question 1: Criteria

Are the criteria New Jersey is using to identify which languages to translate the assessments into still the best metric?

Responses

- Asks about the process and cost of translating the tests, advocating for translations in all available languages.
- Criticizes the low 5 percent threshold for translation as fiscally irresponsible for such a small population.
- Points out challenges with parents not disclosing other languages spoken at home on district forms, leading to potential language barriers during assessments.
- Raises concerns about content-specific words in assessments not existing in students' spoken languages, impacting comprehension.
- Advocates for teaching students in English while providing transition resources in all spoken languages within the district, such as Urdu/English dictionaries and translated materials.
- Advocates for more translation, even for a few students; suggested leveraging technology for to reduce costs.
- Raises concerns about the adequacy of criteria for first-year ML students and the impact of exclusion on self-confidence and engagement during assessments.
- Shares a testing window story highlighting students' challenges in taking assessments in unfamiliar languages.
- Emphasizes the importance of students being able to take tests in languages they understand to assess their knowledge accurately.
- Recommends translating assessments across the state if many students could benefit.
- Questions the perceived cost of electronic translation and expresses appreciation for the work of the NJDOE.
- Retain the first bullet point as it aligns with the group's perspective.
- Expand the second bullet point to encompass the need for a broader range of criteria to account for the diverse student population.
- Consider input from principals and supervisors organization members who may have valuable recommendations.

- Suggests exploring the possibility of using regions rather than counties for better representation.
- Proposes preparing tests in the top 5 languages across the state to align with state demographics.
- Advocates for the state to cover the cost of providing assessments in top languages, with districts being able to make specific requests.
- Questions the data tracking mechanisms for multilingual learner populations over a three-year period.
- Disagreement on current criteria, suggesting focusing on total population by county.
- Questioning why top languages cannot be translated for assessments.
- Belief that assessment companies should be able to handle language translations at a reasonable cost.
- Students are frustrated as instructions can be read in their language, but the assessment is unavailable in that language.
- Concerns about fairness and penalization for students.
- Highlighting the growth of Portuguese and Creole speakers as languages to consider for assessments.
- Concerns about hindering students' understanding due to assessments not being in their language.
- Questioning the original criteria-setting process and the purpose of ELA assessments.
- Unclear understanding of the discussion points.
- Recommendation to reduce the 20% criteria to 10%.
- Questioning the problem being addressed.
- Suggestion to make criteria specific to the city level rather than county.
- Disagreement with current metric effectiveness.
- Desire to explore the future of assessments, including AI and translation services.
- Questioning the necessity of a set percentage for criteria.
- Emphasizing the need for communication between SEAs and assessment providers for language needs.
- Discussion on the impact of SEA capacity on decision-making.

Key Feedback Points on the Assessment Proposal

Responses

- Advocacy for translating assessments into multiple languages to accommodate diverse student populations and ensure accurate knowledge assessment.
- Concerns about the adequacy of current criteria for determining language translation needs, particularly for first-year multilingual students.
- Criticism of low translation thresholds, with stakeholders advocating for translations in all available languages to support students effectively.
- Challenges related to language barriers, including parents not disclosing spoken languages at home and potential content-specific word disparities impacting assessment comprehension.
- Emphasize the importance of student engagement and self-confidence during assessments, highlighting the negative impact of exclusion and language barriers.
- Suggest leveraging technology for cost-effective translation solutions and ensuring that students can take tests in languages they understand.
- Appreciation for efforts by the NJDOE in addressing language-related assessment challenges while also advocating for additional resources to support multilingual learners effectively.

Major Themes and Takeaways from Session

- **Appreciation for NJDOE Staff:** The copious notes taken by the NJDOE are acknowledged and appreciated.
- **Flexibility and Responsiveness of the NJDOE:** Stakeholders noted the NJDOE's flexibility in responding to their questions and concerns.
- **Acknowledgement and Gratitude:** Stakeholders expressed gratitude to the NJDOE for taking the time to recap discussions 1–3 and for their efforts in preparing proposals.
- **Positive Feedback on NJDOE's Work:** Stakeholders are pleased with the work being done at NJDOE. Acknowledging the efforts in preparing proposals and expressed gratitude for being included in the process.
- **Engagement with NJTSS and New Discussions:** The discussion on the New Jersey Tiered System of Supports (NJTSS) is extremely engaging and [we've] gained a new understanding of assessment criteria.
- **Support for NJTSS Distribution:** Emphasis on the importance of the NJDOE leaning into marketing and finding ways to distribute NJTSS to districts effectively.
- **Collaboration and Support:** Stakeholders expressed a willingness for their organization(s) to support the NJDOE in disseminating information to other stakeholders and indicated that the NJDOE is “on the right track” with the assessment proposal.

List of External 2024 Stakeholder Working Group Members

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

Part II

Following the collaborative review process described in the prior section, from July 24, 2024 through August 28, 2024, the NJDOE posted the draft 2024 ESSA State Plan for public review. Under ESEA section 8304, before submitting any amendment to the USED, a state must “afford a reasonable opportunity for public comment on the amendment and consider such comments.” This public comment posting timeline was designed to mirror the timeframe for public comment in 2017, which ran from February 15, 2017 through March 20, 2017.

Notifications beginning in July 2023, in December 2023, and culminating in July 2024, provided LEA chief school administrators and the general public ongoing updates about the revision to the ESSA State Plan and the opportunities to provide feedback to the NJDOE. To seek comments from LEAs and schools in the State, the NJDOE consulted with stakeholder groups that included LEA representatives. Notifications were sent to listservs, including over 1,000 LEA administrators, and shared through partner educator organization publications, including school boards, principals, and educators.

The NJDOE gratefully received comments from individual stakeholders and organizations, as noted below. The comments were carefully reviewed by NJDOE staff and summarized here for brevity. The summary is not designed to be an exhaustive capture of feedback. If commenters recommended changes to systems governed outside the ESSA State Plan, they were not included below but shared with the relevant NJDOE teams for their consideration. For additional information, stakeholders can reach out to essa@doe.nj.gov.

1. The Arc of New Jersey

The Arc of New Jersey, the state’s largest advocacy group for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their families, thanks the NJDOE for the opportunity to comment on the draft 2024 ESSA State Plan. They commend the NJDOE’s commitment to stakeholder feedback and highlight their work supporting over 1,000 families annually on special education issues. The Arc raises concerns about how the English Language Proficiency Indicator requirement may impact English learners with IDD and urges a thorough review of measurement tools for accuracy and fairness. They emphasize the need to address chronic absenteeism, particularly among students with IDD, who are more likely to experience absenteeism due to complex mental and physical challenges. The Arc calls for proactive collaboration between schools and families to improve attendance and student success, appreciating the opportunity to engage in the stakeholder workgroups and the NJDOE’s ongoing support for students with disabilities. These comments were submitted by Thomas Baffuto, Executive Director.

NJDOE Response

The NJDOE appreciated Arc New Jersey’s engagement in this process, support for incremental changes to the 2024 ESSA State Plan, and feedback on critical elements of the plan. To continually evaluate and improve English Language Proficiency, the NJDOE has committed to engaging stakeholders focused on this particular issue throughout the year. Members interested in this topic and other topics related to multilingual learners and school accountability can contact essa@doe.nj.gov. The NJDOE agrees it is important to work with communities to address absenteeism, and chronic absenteeism continues to be a focus and will remain a focus in our NJ State ESSA Plan. Absenteeism negatively affects academic performance, increasing the risk of lower academic performance and dropping out, and empowering schools to recognize the potential disproportionate impact among students with IDD is important. To highlight the important link between regular school attendance and educational success, the NJDOE has planned activities for the 2024-25 school year to encourage consistent school attendance and reduce student

absenteeism for all students. NJDOE is committed to supporting schools in implementing proactive, data-driven interventions and fostering strong partnerships with families/guardians to improve student attendance and address the impact amongst those in our most vulnerable student populations. To this end, the NJDOE agrees that it is important to consider the needs of students with intellectual and developmental disabilities when identifying the root causes of student absenteeism. Please refer to our [Data-Based Decision Making for Addressing Chronic Absenteeism document](#) as part of its guidance on effective approaches, including ways to collaborate with families/guardians and address the underlying barriers to regular attendance. The NJDOE is dedicated to working collaboratively to enhance the educational experience and outcomes for all students, especially those with disabilities.

2. Samuel Chiang

Samuel Chiang asked the NJDOE to consider adopting 6-7-year graduation rates for students with significant disabilities who need additional support beyond 12th grade. Currently, districts are penalized in the graduation rate indicator for supporting students in 18–21-year-old programs despite the clear benefits of preparing them for future academic or career paths. This disincentive may discourage districts from offering these essential programs, as it negatively impacts their graduation rates. As a result, many students with disabilities who would benefit from extended support might not receive it due to the current structure of the graduation rate indicator. Samuel Chiang is the Director of Research, Planning, Evaluation, and Testing at Bogota School District.

NJDOE Response

The NJDOE appreciates the commenter’s support for including 6-year graduation rates in its graduation rate indicator. Moving forward, if available, the NJDOE may also consider collaboration with stakeholders, including 7-year graduation rates. The NJDOE agrees that the ESSA accountability system should better align with requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Notably, however, students are legally entitled to receive a Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) tailored to their needs through age 21, regardless of the ESSA accountability structure and federal laws. This includes special education services, related services, and accommodations to support their academic and functional progress. These services are provided in the least restrictive environment and include an Individualized Education Program (IEP) to address their unique educational requirements. Therefore, regardless of accountability incentives, we must provide students with the services they are entitled to.

3. Elizabeth J. Franks

Elizabeth J. Franks is a lifelong educator in bilingual and ESL education, and she supports the revisions to the ESSA State Plan and the spirit of ESSA, which aims to hold districts accountable for the success of multilingual learners. Under the present system, several measures are appropriate for this specialized population, while others do not capture the dynamic nature of these students. For example, the current measure of participation and progress on standardized tests are valid measurements of achievement and access to content standards. Including ML students who formerly received LIEP services within four years in the proficiency calculation is also an equitable way to measure the success of schools/districts and students. These former students are usually equivalent or close to comparable to native English speakers. However, Ms. Franks urges the NJDOE to consider changes to the metrics used in the accountability system. While participation and progress on standardized tests are useful, MLs in lower English proficiency levels (ELP 1–3) often cannot meet proficiency benchmarks designed for native speakers.

NJDOE Response

The NJDOE appreciates Ms. Franks’ continued engagement as an educator, board member, and often as a representative of her various advocacy roles, her support for this process, and some of the incremental changes to the 2024 ESSA State Plan. The NJDOE agrees to maintain a fair and equitable accountability system that aims to ensure the NJDOE’s continual improvement, particularly as they relate to the metrics of academic success and progress toward English language proficiency indicators. The NJDOE remains committed to identifying research-based and reliable metrics that, when taken together, provide the most comprehensive and fair view of student performance. Working within the parameters of federal and State laws, the NJDOE looks forward to continued data analysis, research, and discussions with stakeholders to improve how the metrics related to multilingual learners help the NJDOE to differentiate school performance meaningfully. As mentioned in Comment 1, to continually evaluate and improve English Language Proficiency, the NJDOE has committed to engaging stakeholders focused on this particular issue throughout the year. Among many education roles, Ms. Frank is President of Bradley Beach Board of Education.

4. New Jersey Educator Association (NJEA)

The New Jersey Educator Association (NJEA) commends the NJDOE for its collaborative approach in developing the proposed plan, emphasizing growth over proficiency-based metrics, and considering innovative measurement methods. They also appreciate the NJDOE’s efforts to refine chronic absenteeism calculations for better accuracy in identifying schools needing support. The NJEA looks forward to observing the implementation of these changes and reviewing the resulting data. The NJEA continues to recommend reducing statewide standardized testing. The NJEA’s Student Success Index, proposed in 2017, could be a starting point for additional stakeholder discussion when looking to expand the School Quality and Student Success Metrics menu. The NJEA believes meaningful stakeholder engagement is critical to ensuring ESSA’s success. Unfortunately, local stakeholder engagement—if it happens at all—is not living up to its promise. The NJDOE should rectify this shortcoming by explicitly committing to the ESSA State Plan to ensure all districts give stakeholder groups the voice they deserve. These comments were submitted by Michael Flynn, Associate Director of NJEA Government Relations, Sean Hadley, Associate Director of NJEA Government Relations, and Elisabeth Yucis, Associate Director of NJEA Professional Development and Instructional Issues.

NJDOE Response

The NJDOE appreciates the NJEA’s ongoing engagement in this process and support for incremental changes to the 2024 ESSA State Plan. Regarding the definition of “inexperienced teacher,” each state must define this precise term under ESSA. As New Jersey’s definition aligns with “novice” and NJDOE agrees it is the preferred term, it will maintain the definition to ensure compliance is understood. The NJDOE agrees that meaningful stakeholder engagement is critical for ESSA’s success at the State and local level. To assist LEAs in ensuring they comply with Federal laws related to meaningful engagement, the NJDOE, in partnership with various stakeholders, including NJEA partners, developed [the Local Stakeholder Engagement Under The Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\): A Guide for District and School Leaders](#). This guide provides a list of the minimum stakeholder engagement requirements for using the main ESEA funding streams and also includes best practices and examples of exemplary engagement. As a result of this comment, the NJDOE added a clarifying sentence in the introduction to the 2024 ESSA State Plan, to more clearly remind LEAs that stakeholder engagement is a critical element of the continuous improvement process and that it is federally mandated when LEAs develop plans for and implement federal programs described in this ESSA State Plan. Finally, the NJDOE is committed to continually improving its own

stakeholder engagement and collaborating with stakeholders around the State to find ways to increase local stakeholder engagement.

5. New Jersey Speech-Language Hearing Association (NJSHA)

The appreciates the NJDOE’s review of the NJ ESSA 2024 Draft and requests inclusion in future ESSA Stakeholder Working Groups. Representing audiologists and speech-language pathologists (SLPs) in New Jersey, NJSHA emphasizes the vital role of SLPs in supporting both special and general education students, particularly in language development and literacy. NJSHA expresses concerns about the lack of specialized professional development opportunities for speech-language specialists (SLSs) and urges the NJDOE to include “educational services providers” in the ESSA draft sections addressing professional development opportunities and funding, which currently reference only “teachers.” Donna Spillman-Kennedy, MS, CCC-SLP, NJSHA President, submitted these comments.

NJDOE Response

The NJDOE appreciates NJSHA’s interest in additional stakeholder engagement related to New Jersey’s ESSA State Plan and recognizes the vital role all educators, including educational services providers and teachers, play in students’ academic success. Accordingly, the NJDOE updated section A.4 (Improving Skills of Educators) to add “educational services providers” to the list of professionals to which the NJDOE provides professional development. Whenever possible, the NJDOE aimed to use the term “educator.” Note that references to teachers remain, particularly in some USED template questions and when the NJDOE quotes ESSA or State laws regarding teachers. Also, in a few places throughout the plan, the term “specialized instructional support personnel” is used, and this term would include speech-language pathologists and other educational service providers.

6. New Jersey Tutoring Corps

New Jersey Tutoring Corps requested additional information regarding a 2017 provision for 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLCs), allowing academic support during the school day. While this was previously restricted to non-school hours, it is unclear whether the pilot program for expanded learning opportunities intended to test this model has yielded results or become a permanent part of the program. Given the benefits of in-school academic enrichment, like high-impact tutoring for addressing pandemic-related learning gaps, the comments requested clarification on the pilot’s results and advocate for the permanent inclusion of in-school support within the 21st CCLC funding framework. Jessica Kelly, Ed.M., Executive Director of Programs, submitted these comments, and Katherine Bassett, Chief Executive Officer, submitted similar comments separately.

NJDOE Response

NJDOE implemented the Extended Learning Program Activities (ELPA) grant for three years from September 1, 2017 – August 31, 2020. Applicants were not eligible to apply for funds under the ELPA and 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program. One applicant, East Orange School District, was awarded the grant during this time. The NJDOE program officer monitored the grantee’s administration for program implementation and effectiveness, program logistics, organizational commitment and capacity, and fiscal implementation. The grantee was compliant with monitoring components. The Notice of Grant Opportunity that established the [Extended Learning Program Activities](#) can be found on the NJDOE website. As noted above, this program ran through August 31, 2020, and experienced disruption from the COVID-19 pandemic. As resources provided through Elementary and

Secondary School Emergency Relief and the American Rescue Plan increased resources available to support high-impact tutoring, the pilot program was allowed to sunset to avoid redundant offerings from the NJDOE. The NJDOE currently offers the 21st CCLC program for grantees to service students before, after, and during the summer. Grantees are encouraged to collaborate with school-day staff to enhance student learning and provide enrichment opportunities to supplement the school day. The NJDOE's High Impact Tutoring program is extended through June 30, 2025. At that point, the NJDOE will revisit available resources and consider expanding offerings provided through the 21st CCLC program.

7. New Jersey Association of School Librarians (NJASL)

The New Jersey Association of School Librarians (NJASL) emphasizes that strong school library programs are linked to improved student achievement, particularly benefiting vulnerable and at-risk learners. Their input is based on research showing that effective library programs contribute positively to educational outcomes. School libraries are crucial in meeting students' technological and academic needs, particularly under Title IV-A of ESSA. The Innovative Approaches to Literacy program provides targeted literacy training and resources to young learners in high-poverty areas and supports literacy development via Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grants. Additionally, school libraries offer access to eBooks, audiobooks, online learning platforms, and tutoring resources for homework assistance. Mary Moyer submitted these comments.

NJDOE Response

The NJDOE values NJASL's engagement in this process and support for incremental changes to the 2024 ESSA State Plan. The NJDOE agrees with the NJASL regarding the crucial role of school libraries and has included the recommendations to add access to school library resources to the lists of implementation strategies for services provided to migratory children.

8. People's Organization for Progress (POP) and Marcella Simadiris

The People's Organization for Progress (POP) and Marcella Simadiris seek a longer, more inclusive public comment period for the NJDOE's proposed changes to the ESSA state plan, citing concerns over insufficient stakeholder engagement. Ms. Simadiris raised concerns that the 2016-2017 stakeholder engagement process was more extensive. The commenters also ask if grassroots organizations were involved in the stakeholder consultation process and whether all NJDOE accountability systems should be amended to align the reporting of inequities in all accountability systems, making information more accessible. They ask the NJDOE to engage stakeholders about the type and use of data included in the Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS). A shift in reporting data meaningfully by focusing on measuring justice instead of achievement is essential in closing any gap. The comments from the POP were submitted by Lawrence Hamm, Chairman.

NJDOE Response

The NJDOE thanks the commenters for their input and agrees that meaningful stakeholder engagement is critical. The NJDOE appreciates Ms. Simadiris' support of and engagement in the 2016-17 process. The process of designing a new State accountability system from the beginning was much more time-intensive than the 2023-24 review process, which, at this time, is resulting in a few targeted changes. This review process was an extension of the original process in 2016-2017. For example, changes such as using a six-year graduation rate were requested in 2017 but could not be implemented until this revision process.

The NJDOE disagrees that the stakeholder engagement period was insufficient for the most recent round of changes. Still, the NJDOE added clarifications to page 2 and this section (Appendix D) of the 2024 ESSA State Plan to more clearly describe the stakeholder engagement process. The public notification that the 2024 draft ESSA Plan was available for public comment was additionally distributed through various organizations representing thousands of New Jersey stakeholders. It was posted for the same number of days (30) the NJDOE typically posts amendments to its ESSA State Plan, including the draft 2017 ESSA State Plan. The NJDOE signaled its intent to review and revise the ESSA State Plan beginning in the summer of 2023. Through the Stakeholder Working Group and additional engagement described above, the NJDOE collected diverse and thorough input from many organizations, including community organizations, professional associations, organizations representing specific populations of students, parent organizations, afterschool providers, and more. The clarifications above and on page 2 include listing the types of organizations and school and community roles diverse stakeholders hold. The NJDOE agrees that continually improving data quality, reporting, and accessibility to data so the information is clear and easy to understand for all community members is an educational priority. The NJDOE also agrees that it is important to include stakeholders when developing new data systems like the SLDS that are currently in development. While student group averages are weighed equally to whole school averages within the ESSA summative rating, the commenter's recommendation to measure opportunity gaps more clearly in all New Jersey accountability systems should continue to be discussed and explored. Finally, the NJDOE continues to prioritize the improvements of the [New Jersey Annual School Performance Report](#). Questions or suggestions, in addition to those submitted, can be submitted to reportcard@doe.nj.gov.

9. Marcella Simadiris

In addition to the comments above, Marcella Simadiris, M.Ed. from Montclair, provided input about additional sections of the draft 2024 ESSA State Plan. Ms. Simadiris states that parts of Title I, Part A, sections are confusing and that there needs to be greater connections among federal funding program implementation. Ms. Simadiris commented that more than the accountability data needs to be considered when implementing school improvement and there needs to be a greater focus on the comprehensive needs assessment process and the resource allocation review, particularly through a lens of equity. Ms. Simadiris lays out the benefits of exploring Career and Technology Education (CTE) in the middle school years and provides a variety of resources and articles that support the importance of focusing on the students who have been historically marginalized in the past.

NJDOE Response

The NJDOE appreciates the feedback from Ms. Simadiris. As a result of this feedback, the NJDOE updated descriptions of the different levels of support and the resource allocation review in the hopes that it will be clearer to the reader. The NJDOE maintains that the purpose of the accountability and monitoring systems is to concentrate the limited federal and State to the schools and student groups that need the most help at a particular time. Once the NJDOE coaching staff begins to work more deeply with schools and LEAs that have been identified as in need of the most help, the NJDOE, in collaboration with the schools and LEAs, engages in deeper analysis, conversations, research-based practices, student-and data-focused decision making, and evidence-based coaching models. The NJDOE agrees that a comprehensive needs assessment is important when using all federal funds. The NJDOE staff are developing toolkits to help LEAs engage in robust needs assessment processes as they continually improve their resources. The NJDOE is grateful to Ms. Simadiris for sharing helpful resources and her involvement in the continual improvement of the ESSA State Plan.

10. SPAN Parent Advocacy Network and Family Voices NJ

SPAN Parent Advocacy Network and Family Voices NJ appreciate the opportunity to comment on New Jersey's proposed ESSA State Plan. As advocates for families of children with disabilities, they support four-year and extended graduation rates, highlighting that additional time can benefit students' developmental and post-graduation outcomes. They agree on the importance of ensuring underserved student populations receive the support needed to accelerate their learning regarding growth trend evaluations, urging a commitment from NJDOE to assist all schools in achieving performance goals. They raise concerns about how the NJDOE will "continually evaluate growth trends to ensure targets are ambitious and achievable." Additionally, they raise concerns about the potential misuse of absenteeism data, warning against punitive measures that could unfairly target families instead of fostering supportive school environments. They view chronic absenteeism as a symptom of broader issues rather than a standalone problem. Carolyn Hayer, Executive Director, SPAN, and Lauren Agoratus, M.A., NJ Coordinator, Family Voices@SPAN, submitted these comments.

NJDOE Response

The NJDOE appreciated SPAN's engagement in this process and deep consideration for the various amendment proposals. Note that ESSA requires states to establish "ambitious State-designed long-term goals," including measurements of interim progress toward meeting such goals. A guiding principle of New Jersey's accountability system is to make ESSA goals and targets achievable to ensure the data matters. It can be used to gauge growth at the school level. The NJDOE notes SPAN's concerns about chronic absenteeism and agrees that it is important to continue supporting schools and communities as they establish multi-systemic approaches and policies about student attendance. As explained in Comment 1, the NJDOE is committed to supporting schools in implementing proactive, data-driven interventions and fostering strong partnerships with families/guardians to improve student attendance and address the impact amongst those in our most vulnerable student populations. The NJDOE is dedicated to working collaboratively to enhance the educational experience and outcomes for all students, especially those with disabilities, and improve school conditions.

11. United Way of Northern New Jersey

United Way of Northern New Jersey thanks the NJDOE for the opportunity to comment on the 2024 Draft ESSA State Plan, emphasizing their support for expanding high-quality, full-day preschool for all three- and four-year-olds. They advocate for affordable access as a critical need for families. United Way urges the NJDOE to outline specific steps towards universal pre-K and explore public/private partnerships to leverage community resources. They commend Governor Murphy's continued focus on preschool expansion and express their readiness to collaborate and share insights from their United In-Care childcare pilot. Michelle Roers, LSW Senior Vice President of Strategies for ALICE, submitted these comments.

NJDOE Response

High-quality preschool can change the educational trajectories of young children and influence their lifetime achievement and well-being. The NJDOE thanks the United Way of Northern New Jersey for their support and collaboration as it continues to enhance support for existing programs and increase funding opportunities to expand the program into new districts, with support and partnership from New Jersey's licensed childcare and Head Start providers, and to increase the number of available seats in existing programs.