

2026 Local Special Education Determinations: What's Changed

Three Things You Need to Know

1. Factors renamed **A-K** (was 1-11) based on field feedback
2. Maximum points increased from **35** to **50** for better differentiation
3. Missing data impacts your score across multiple years

About These Changes

The 2026 Determinations Rubric introduces updates in response to field feedback and to better recognize local educational agency (LEA) compliance efforts. Changes include renaming factors with letters (A-K) for clarity, increasing variation in LEA scores, and accounting for differentiation by volume of referrals. Maximum possible points have increased from 35 to 50.

Changes at-a-Glance

Total Factors: 11 (Factors A-K) **Changed:** 6 factors (55%) **Unchanged:** 5 factors (45%)

Key Changes by Factor

Factor	Focus Area	Old Point Range	New Point Range	What's Changed	Why It Matters
A (was 1)	SPP/APR Indicator 4B Performance (Long-Term Suspensions)	0-4	0-8	↑ Points doubled	Increased recognition for meeting federal requirements
B (was 2)	SPP/APR Indicator 9 & 10 Performance (Disproportionate Representation)	0-4	0-8	↑ Points doubled	Aligned with Factor A
C (was 3)	SPP/APR Indicator 11 Performance (Child Find)	1-4	0-6	⚡ Restructured <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More points • New conditions by referral volume • New penalty for extreme noncompliance 	Fairer evaluations for LEAs with ≤ 5 referrals; stronger accountability; recognizes valid delays
D (was 4)	SPP/APR Indicator 12 Performance (Age 3 Transition)	1-4	0-6	⚡ Restructured	Aligned with Factor C
E (was 5)	SPP/APR Indicator 13 Performance (Age 16 Transition)	1-4	0-4	+ New penalty tier <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Added 0-point condition for <50% compliance 	Consequences for extreme noncompliance
F (was 6)	Compliance with Alternate Assessment (DLM) Participation Rate Cap	0-4	0-4	No change	---
G (was 7)	SPP/APR Indicator 5A Performance (LRE)	0-4	0-4	No change	---
H (was 8)	Successfully Addressed Noncompliance	0-1	0-4	⚠ Now applies to all LEAs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previously "Not Applicable" now worth 4 points 	LEAs compliant in previous cycle now earn 4 points.
I (was 9)	SPP/APR Indicator 8 and/or 14 Participation	0-2	0-2	No change	---
J (was 10)	Data Quality	0-2	0-2	Minor wording changes only	---

Factor	Focus Area	Old Point Range	New Point Range	What's Changed	Why It Matters
K (was 11)	Timely IDEA Part B Grant Submissions	0-2	0-2	No change	---

Critical Requirement: Special Education Data Submission

Factors A-D, G, and J rely on Special Education Data Submission records. **LEAs that do not submit student records to the Special Education Data Submission cannot be scored on applicable factors and receive 0 points.**

Due to federal reporting timelines, missing one (1) year of data impacts Determinations across multiple years.

Which Factors Require Data Submission and Which Determination Year is Affected?

Factor	Max Points	What Data Are Used	Determination Year Affected When Non-Submission Year is 2025
A	8	Discipline by race/ethnicity	2028
B	8	Special education enrollment by race/ethnicity and disability	2027, 2028, and 2029
C	6	Evaluation timeline	2026
D	6	Part C transition timeline	2026
G	4	Educational environment	2027
J	2	Submission accuracy and timeliness	2027

The cumulative impact of non-submission to the Special Education Data collection is 50 total points lost across 4 determination cycles.

This means: A single data submission failure affects your determination category for four (4) consecutive years, potentially moving you from “Meets Requirements” to “Needs Assistance” or lower.

What These Changes Mean for Your LEA

If you have strong performance on SPP/APR Indicators 4B, 9 and 10 (Factors A & B)

You can now earn up to 16 points (vs. 8 points previously) for meeting compliance in these federal accountability areas. This represents a significant increase—these two factors alone now account for 32% of your total possible score.

What to do: Review your current data for these indicators. Even if you’re meeting compliance now, implement ongoing monitoring systems to maintain performance.

If you were fully compliant last year (Factor H)

You now earn 4 points. This change was implemented to reward prevention and sustained strong performance that positively affects most LEAs. Under the old rubric, only LEAs that had noncompliance and corrected it earned points. Now, LEAs that achieved full compliance in the previous year earn the most points.

What to do: Focus on maintaining compliance across all areas this year to earn these 4 points next year.

If you have extreme noncompliance (Factors C, D, or E)

New 0-point conditions distinguish severe noncompliance. Previously, an LEA at 40% compliance and an LEA at 75% compliance both earned 1 point. Now, while the LEA at 75% compliance continues to earn 1 point, the LEA at 40% compliance earns 0 points.

This creates meaningful differentiation and emphasizes the seriousness of extreme noncompliance.

What to do: If you're in this situation, contact NJDOE immediately for technical assistance. Implement intensive corrective action plans.

If you did not submit Special Education data in fall 2025

Due to federal reporting timelines, you will lose points across multiple determination years (2026-2029).

Immediate impact: Earn 0 of 12 points on Factors C and D in 2026

Total cumulative loss: 50 points across 4 determination cycles (see detailed table above)

What to do: If this applies to you, contact NJDOE immediately. Ensure 2026-27 data is submitted to stop the cascade. Request technical assistance if you have system issues.

Why This Matters

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires states to make annual determinations of LEA performance based on compliance, student outcomes, and valid data. The updated framework:

- ✓ **Strengthens alignment** with federal expectations and priorities
- ✓ **Ensures determinations** are based on complete and reliable information
- ✓ **Creates proportional accountability** that recognizes the complexity of federal requirements
- ✓ **Provides fairer evaluation** for LEAs with varying volumes of referrals and evaluations
- ✓ **Rewards prevention** and sustained compliance, not just correction
- ✓ **Implements field feedback** on usability and clarity

These changes support continuous improvement in special education services for New Jersey students.

Resources and Support

For more information on the changes implemented for the 2026 Local Special Education Determinations Rubric, please visit the NJDOE's website at:

<https://www.nj.gov/education/specialed/monitor/accountability/determinations.shtml>

To see how your LEA performance against the 2025 Local Special Education Determinations Rubric, please visit the NJDOE's Determinations dashboard at:

<https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/njdepartmentofeducation/viz/Ry2025Determinations/Determinations>

For NJSLEDS data submission requirements and deadlines, please visit: <https://www.nj.gov/education/sleds/>

Contact Information

General Determinations Questions: OSEdata@doe.nj.gov

Data Submission Technical Support: NJSLEDS@doe.nj.gov