

2025 ESSA Accountability Process: ESSA Plan Updates



New Jersey's updated and revised [Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\) State Plan](#) was approved by the United States Department of Education (USED) on May 27, 2025. This document outlines the updates in the new plan that impact the 2025 ESSA Accountability process.

Updated Long-Term Goals and Annual Targets

Academic Achievement and Graduation Rates

The most significant change in the updated ESSA State Plan is the methodology used to define the long-term goals and annual targets for academic achievement and graduation rate.

For academic achievement, the NJDOE defined a future goal that 100% of all students will meet or exceed expectations on both the statewide English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics assessments. Each student group has a unique long-term goal to close the gap between baseline 2022-2023 performance and the future goal by 20% every six years.

For graduation rates, the NJDOE defined future goals that 95% of students will graduate within four years, 96% of students will graduate in five years, and 97% of students will graduate within six years of entering high school. Each student group has a unique long-term goal to close the gap between Cohort 2022 graduation rates and the future goal by 25% every six years.

For both academic achievement and graduation rate indicators, the annual targets for each student group represent the annual progress needed to reach the long-term goal in six years.

Additionally, each year the annual targets for the remaining years will be reviewed. If a school or student group has not met its annual target for the previous 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. The long-term goal does not change.

The new annual targets were used for the first time starting with the 2023-2024 targets in January 2025. The 2024-2025 process is the first time that targets have been adjusted based on whether student groups met their 2023-2024 targets. The 2024-2025 annual targets, which include the annual adjustments, are posted on the [NJDOE Accountability webpage](#).

Progress toward English Language Proficiency (ELP)

The updated ESSA Plan does not include any changes to the methodology used to define the long-term goals and annual targets for Progress toward ELP, but it did establish new long-term goals and annual targets based on 2022-2023 baseline performance data.

The updated annual targets were used for the 2024 accountability process and will continue to be used for the 2025 process. The long-term goals and annual targets for the Progress toward ELP indicator can be found in Appendix A of the ESSA State Plan (see Figure Appendix.A.6).

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New Accountability Indicators

Six-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate

The updated plan now includes six-year federal adjusted cohort graduation rate as an indicator, in addition to four-year and five-year rates. The methodology used to calculate six-year adjusted cohort graduation rates is aligned with the four-year and five-year methodology. The NJDOE added six-year federal graduation rates to the School Performance Reports starting with the 2023-2024 reports.

Previously, weight for the graduation indicators was split evenly between four-year and five-year graduation rates. Starting with the 2024-2025 process, half of the overall graduation weight will be on the four-year rate, and the remaining half of the overall weight will be split evenly between the five-year and six-year rates.

Graduation Rate	Previous Graduation Weight Distribution	Updated Graduation Weight Distribution
4-Year Rate	50%	50%
5-Year Rate	50%	25%
6-Year Rate	n/a	25%

High School Persistence

The new plan also adds High School Persistence as a new indicator of school quality or student success. High School Persistence measures the percentage of students based on graduation cohort who either graduate with a state-endorsed diploma within six years of entering high school or remain actively enrolled through the end of year six. The NJDOE added this measure to the School Performance Reports (as part of the six-year graduation cohort profile table) starting with the 2023-2024 reports.

Starting with 2024-2025, performance on this indicator will be reported along with other accountability indicators. It will initially have 0% weight in the accountability system and the NJDOE has not yet defined long-term goals or annual targets for this indicator. This means that it will not be included in the calculation of summative scores and performance levels will not be reported for this indicator. The NJDOE will engage with stakeholders and review data to determine the weight and performance levels that will be proposed for this indicator in a future amendment to the ESSA State Plan.

Expanded Indicator Performance Levels

The updated ESSA plan expands the defined performance levels for the academic achievement, graduation, and progress toward ELP indicators. Previously, if the annual targets were not met for these indicators (or not met within a confidence interval for academic achievement and progress toward ELP), a student group's performance level would be "Target not Met," regardless of whether a school made improvement from the previous year.

In the updated plan, the "Target not Met" category is replaced with two categories: "No Improvement" and "Progress, Target not Met". Student groups that did not meet the annual target but had performance that is higher than the previous year will have a performance level of "Progress, Target not Met". The "No Improvement" performance level will be used for student groups that did not meet the annual target and had performance that was equal to or lower than the previous year. The 2024-2025 process will be the first time these new performance levels are used.

Read the [ESSA State Plan](#) on the NJDOE website.

More details about the accountability process can be found on the [NJDOE Accountability webpage](#).

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Changes to Calculation Rules

The updated ESSA plan included a small change to the calculation of chronic absenteeism rates. In the previously approved plan, the NJDOE only included students in chronic absenteeism rate calculations if the total of their days present and absent was at least 45 days. In the updated plan, this was changed so that students are only included if the total of their days present and absent is at least 90 days. This change was made to align with the federal definition of partial attendance.

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