Future Alignment

NJDOE will use the shift to *ESSA* as an opportunity to better align New Jersey's accountability systems and to more accurately and fairly measure student, school and LEA performance. NJDOE plans to move from three distinct systems to a unified system of accountability with complementary indicators and a holistic system of support.

Reading the Proposed Accountability Plan in Context

A multitude of stakeholders provided input to NJDOE in developing the *ESSA* state plan. Most of the stakeholder feedback was concentrated around school accountability, as well as outlining measures and information that parents, students and educators deemed important indicators of a school's success. While NJDOE plans to enhance and align all three school and district accountability systems, the state plan outlines New Jersey's proposal for school accountability as required under *ESSA,* which focuses on identifying the bottom performing schools in need of support and improvement. As a result, not all of the measures proposed by stakeholders will be reflected in the state plan as some of the indicators would be more appropriate either at the LEA level via NJQSAC or for school and LEA reporting.

Acknowledging wide and persistent gaps in academic performance between historically disadvantaged subgroups and their peers, NJDOE recognizes the needs of all New Jersey students are not currently being met. While New Jersey understands that external factors contribute to achievement gaps, NJDOE has a responsibility to ensure schools and LEAs are focused on closing equity gaps regardless of the contributing factors. NJDOE developed many of the proposals outlined in the state plan with the goal that schools and LEAs throughout New Jersey can and must do more to help close the equity gap.

4.1 Accountability Systems

A. Indicators. *Describe the measure(s) included in each of the Academic Achievement, Academic Progress, Graduation Rate, Progress in Achieving English Language Proficiency, and School Quality or Student Success indicators and how those measures meet the requirements described in section 1111(c)(4)(B) of the ESEA.*

- *The description for each indicator should include how it is valid, reliable, and comparable across all LEAs in the State.*
- *For the measures included within the indicators of Academic Progress and School Quality or Student Success measures, the description may also address how each measure within the indicators is supported by research that high performance or improvement on such measure is likely to increase student learning (e.g., grade point average, credit accumulation, performance in advanced coursework).*
- *For measures within indicators of School Quality or Student Success that are unique to high school, the description must address how research shows that high performance or improvement on the indicator is likely to increase graduation rates, postsecondary enrollment, persistence, completion, or career readiness.*
- *The descriptions for the Academic Progress and School Quality or Student Success indicators must include a demonstration of how each measure aids in the meaningful differentiation of schools by demonstrating varied results across schools in the State.*

Summary

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 NJDOE's proposed indicators, each of which will be described in detail later in this section.

FIGURE 4.1: Overview of All *ESSA* (School Level) Indicators

Required Indicator	New Jersey's Measure(s)	Description	Proposed Weighting (see 4.2.D.ii below)
Academic Achievement	Proficiency rates on annual statewide assessments	Percentage of students in the school who meet grade-level standards on each annual statewide assessment in ELA and mathematics (grades 3-10)	**30%**
Academic Progress ***(applicable to elementary and middle schools)***	Student growth percentile (SGP)	School's median SGP, which shows student's growth from one year to the next in ELA (grades 4-8) and mathematics (grades 4-7)	**40%** (elementary and middle schools only)
Graduation Rate ***(applicable to high schools)***	Four-year and five-year graduation rates	Using the adjusted cohort methodology, percentage of students who graduate: • within four years of entering ninth grade; and • within five years of entering ninth grade *Note: Four- and five-year graduation rates will be weighted equally*	**40%** (high schools only)
Progress Toward Achieving English Language Proficiency	English learner progress on the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0	Percentage of English learners making expected progress from one year to the next on the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 summative assessment (K-12)	**20%**
School Quality or Student Success	Chronic absenteeism	Percentage of the school's students who are chronically absent. Chronically absent is defined as not present for 10 percent or more of the days that he or she was "in membership" at a school. .	**10%**

Indicator 1: Academic Achievement

Measure: Proficiency rates on statewide assessments in ELA and mathematics

Description: Pursuant to Section 1111(c)(4)(B)(i)(I) of *ESSA*, the academic achievement indicator must reflect schools' grade-level proficiency rates on statewide ELA and mathematics assessments. In New Jersey's school accountability system, proficiency rates are calculated by the percentage of students meeting grade-level standards on the statewide assessment. The proficiency rates will be calculated based on the performance of all students in grades three through 10 and the performance of all student subgroups (see Section 4.1Bi for subgroup detail). When calculating a school's overall proficiency rate and each subgroup's proficiency rate, NJDOE will weight proficiency rates on ELA and mathematics assessments equally. All of New Jersey's statewide mathematics and ELA assessments underwent a U.S. Department of Education-led peer review in 2016. As a result, New Jersey's current academic assessments were found to substantially meet all legal and technical requirements.

Indicator 2: Academic Progress

Measure: Student growth percentiles (SGP) in ELA and mathematics

Description: Academic progress will be measured with schools' median SGP on statewide ELA and mathematics assessments As the SGP describes a student's academic progress from one year to the next compared to other students with similar prior test scores (academic peers), NJDOE uses SGP to show growth from the prior year for ELA in grades four through eight and for mathematics in grades four through seven. Mathematics in grades three through seven is used because a significant portion of eighth graders take Algebra I, rather than the eighth grade mathematics assessment. SGPs will be calculated based on the performance of all students in applicable tested grades and the performance of student subgroups (see Section 4.1Bi for subgroup detail). When calculating a school's overall growth and each subgroup's growth, NJDOE will weight growth on ELA and mathematics assessments equally (50 percent each), except in eighth grade, where a school's SGP will be derived entirely from results on the ELA assessment.

Indicator 3: Graduation Rate

Measure: Adjusted cohort graduation rates (four- and five-year rates)

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. At the strong request of stakeholders, NJDOE will also include in the graduation rate indicator the percentage of students who graduate within five years of entering ninth grade. Including the five-year graduation rate will allow New Jersey to maintain high standards for all students while recognizing it is important for some students to take additional time to master academic standards.

Graduation rates will be calculated based on the graduation rates of all students and will factor in subgroup graduation rates using the adjusted cohort methodology described in Sections 8101(25) and 8101(23) of *ESSA*. When calculating a school's overall graduation rate, NJDOE will weight four-year graduation rates and five-year graduation rates equally (50 percent each) for a total weighting of 40 percent as indicated on Figure 4.1. As noted in section 1 under long-term graduation rate goals, NJDOE is committed to exploring the feasibility and benefits of including a six- and seven-year graduation rate in future years.

Indicator 4: Progress toward achieving English language proficiency

Measure: English learner progress on the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 English language proficiency assessment

Description: Pursuant to 1111(c)(4)(B)(iv) of *ESSA*, NJDOE's English learner progress indicator will use the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 test to evaluate progress toward English language proficiency (ELP) from one year to the next, based on the starting level of individual students in grades K-12. This measure of progress recognizes students entering English language programs and receiving related services start at different levels of English proficiency. Student growth expectations will be increased by equal intervals each year so all students meet the proficient cut score within five years. NJDOE defines proficiency cut score as a composite score of 4.5 on ACCESS for ELLs 2.0. For more information regarding NJDOE's definition of proficiency, see the "New Jersey Exit Process Form" in Appendix F. The number of years for students to achieve proficiency varies based on the student's starting level of proficiency. This model uses cumulative growth (i.e., previous year's growth is counted toward the current year's growth target) to determine the student's expected level of proficiency based on his/her number of years in the LEA. Therefore, students at lower levels of ELP will have more ambitious annual growth targets. See the chart below.

FIGURE 4.2: Expected ELP Level by Years in District

Initial Year	2nd Year	3rd Year	4th Year	5th Year
Level 1-1.9	IY+(P-IY)/4	IY+[(P-IY)/4]x2	IY+[(P-IY)/4]x3	Met Proficient Cut Score
Level 2-2.9	IY+(P-IY)/3	IY+[(P-IY)/3]x2	Met Proficient Cut Score	--
Level 3-3.9	IY+(P-IY)/2	Met Proficient Cut Score	--	--
Level 4-4.4	Met Proficient Cut Score	--	--	--
Met Proficiency Cut Score	--	--	--	--

Key:
IY= Initial-year proficiency level
P= Proficient cut score

Examples for Illustrative Purposes:

1. An English learner at ELP level 3.5 in the initial year is expected to score at least a 4.0 in the second year and at least a 4.5 in the third year. Therefore, a student starting at level 3.5 would be expected to make a 0.5 ELP level of cumulative growth per year.

FIGURE 4.3: Example 1

Expected ELP Level by Years in District				
Initial Year Level 3.5	**2nd Year Level 4.0**	**3rd Year Level 4.5** *Met Proficient Cut Score*	**4th Year N/A**	**5th Year N/A**
3.5=Initial Year (IY)	IY+(P-IY)/2 IY = 3.5 P = 4.5 Expected Growth from Initial Year: (P-IY)/2 = .5 Expected ELP: 3.5+(4.5-3.5)/2= 4	IY + [(P-IY)/2]x2 IY = 3.5 P = 4.5 Expected Growth from Initial Year: [(P-IY)/2]x2 = 1 Expected ELP: 3.5 + [(4.5-3.5)/2]x2 = 4.5	--	--

2. An English learner at ELP level 1.3 in the initial year would be expected to score at least a 2.1 in the second year, at least a 2.9 in the third year, at least a 3.7 in the fourth year, and at least a 4.5 in the fifth year. Therefore, a student starting at level 1.3 would be expected to make a 0.8 ELP level of cumulative growth per year.

FIGURE 4.4: Example 2

Expected ELP Level by Years in District				
Initial Year Level 1.3	**2nd Year Level 2.1**	**3rd Year Level 2.9**	**4th Year Level 3.7**	**5th Year Level 4.5** *Met Proficient Cut Score*
1.3=Initial Year (IY)	IY+(P-IY)/4 IY = 1.3 P = 4.5 Expected Growth from Initial Year: (P-IY)/4 = .8 Expected ELP: 1.3+(4.5-1.3)/4= 2.1	IY + [(P-IY)/4]x2 IY = 1.3 P = 4.5 Expected Growth from Initial Year: [(P-IY)/4]x2= 1.6 Expected ELP: 1.3 + [(4.5-1.3)/4]x2 = 2.9	IY + [(P-IY)/4]x3 IY = 1.3 P = 4.5 Expected Growth from Initial Year: [(P-IY)/4]x3 = 2.4 Expected ELP: 1.3 + [(4.5-1.3)/4]x3 = 3.7	IY + [(P-IY)/4]x4 IY = 1.3 P = 4.5 Expected Growth from Initial Year: [(P-IY)/4]x4 = 3.2 Expected ELP: 1.3 + [(4.5-1.3)/4]x4 = 4.5

3. An English learner at ELP level 2.1 in the initial year would be expected to score at least a 2.9 in the second year, at least a 3.7 in the third year, at least a 4.5 in the fourth year. A student starting at a 2.1 would be expected to make a 0.8 ELP level of cumulative growth per year.

FIGURE 4.5: Example 3

Expected ELP Level by Years in District				
Initial Year Level 2.1	**2nd Year Level 2.9**	**3rd Year Level 3.7**	**4th Year Level 4.5** *Met Proficient Cut Score*	**5th Year N/A**
2.1 = Initial Year (IY)	IY+(P-IY)/3 IY = 2.1 P = 4.5 Expected Growth from Initial Year: (P-IY)/3 = .8 Expected ELP: 2.1+(4.5-2.1)/3= 2.9	IY + [(P-IY)/3]x2 IY = 2.1 P = 4.5 Expected Growth from Initial Year: [(P-IY)/3]x2 = 1.6 Expected ELP: 2.1 + [(4.5-2.1)/3)]x2 = 3.7	IY + [(P-IY)/3]x3 IY = 2.1 P = 4.5 Expected Growth from Initial Year: [(P-IY)/3]x3= 2.4 Expected ELP: 2.1 + [(4.5-2.1)/3]x3 = 4.5	--

This indicator is valid and comparable due to the use of ACCESS for ELLs as the statewide measure of progress toward English proficiency. 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 English learner progress toward attainment of English language proficiency.

Indicator 5: School quality or student success

Measure: Chronic absenteeism

Description: School quality or student success will be reflected in the percentage of a school's students who are chronically absent in K-12 grade levels[9]. A student is identified as chronically absent when a district reports that he or she has not been present for 10 percent or more of the days that he or she was "in membership" at a school. "Membership" is defined as the number of school days in session in which the student is enrolled/registered during the annual reporting period from July 1 to June 30. The minimum number of days that school must be in session in New Jersey is 180. For a school with a 180 day school year, a student would be "in membership" for 180 days, unless he or she missed school as currently specified in the New Jersey School Register for "Take Our Children to Work Day" (or other rule issued by the Commissioner) or a college visit, limited to a maximum of three days per year for a student in grade 11 or 12 or, pursuant to

[9] Although it is difficult to compare across schools for accountability purposes, the NJDOE recognizes that monitoring and improving attendance rates is critical to ensuring the quality of preschool in New Jersey. Therefore, while New Jersey will not include preschool in chronic absenteeism for the purposes of school accountability, it will be included in reporting for chronic absenteeism.

current N.J.A.C. 6A:32-8.3(h), to observe one of the religious holidays found on "The List of Religious Holidays Permitting Student Absence from School." If a student missed a day of school for one of the three exceptions above, the student would be said to be "in membership" for 179 days.

The number of days present is the number of days that the student attended school when school was in session. A student who is not present for any reason, excused, unexcused or for disciplinary action is absent unless permitted by statute or regulation. 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. 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 45 or more days (taking into account a day(s) excluded for any of the three exceptions above) and will factor in student subgroups (as described in section 4.1B). 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. As mentioned above, NJDOE is in the process of developing detailed guidance for districts on submitting student absenteeism data.

Rationale: Among all of the indicators required by *ESSA*, NJDOE received the most feedback from stakeholders about school quality or student success (see Appendix B for a complete list of stakeholder suggestions). NJDOE is truly grateful for the feedback, which provided a strong understanding of what different stakeholders in New Jersey care about the most.

As part of its process for soliciting input and feedback from stakeholders regarding this indicator, NJDOE asked the following key questions:

1. Do stakeholders support the use of this indicator as one measure of school quality or student success?
2. Is performance and/or progress on the indicator likely to improve student success in college and careers?
3. Is the indicator actionable and within a school's control (versus something only a LEA or other entity could impact)?
4. Does the data supporting the indicator fairly identify schools that are successful and schools that need additional support and improvement?
5. Will data to measure the indicator be available and will that data meet the federal requirements for assessing the indicator? That is, can the data be disaggregated by subgroup, can it be applicable to all schools in a particular grade span, and is it supported by research that clearly demonstrates that performance and/or progress on the indicator are likely to increase student learning?

Why Chronic Absenteeism?

For initial implementation, NJDOE selected chronic absenteeism as its additional indicator of school quality and student success for the following reasons, which relate to the initial questions posed to stakeholders:

1. Do stakeholders support the use of this indicator as one measure of school quality or student success?

   Often stakeholders said the state's indicator of school quality and student success should measure, in some way, whether a school provides a positive school environment. Chronic absenteeism is one type of measure of positive school climate because the more welcoming and supportive a school climate is, the more likely a student is to attend school. Additionally, many stakeholders asked NJDOE to use this particular measure within the *ESSA* school accountability system. See Appendix B for specific stakeholder feedback information.

2. Is performance and/or progress on the indicator likely to improve student success in college and careers?

   Chronic absenteeism provides important information about a school's culture and climate. In addition, it is widely acknowledged that students who are not in school do not learn. A study utilizing self-reported school climate surveys in fourth and eighth grade reveal that schools with higher rates of absenteeism received lower school climate ratings.[10] Further, students cite unsafe school climates as a reason for missing school, which is even more of an issue for underserved student populations. In a nationally representative sample, minority students reported missing school in the past month because of feeling unsafe either at, or traveling to or from, school at greater rates than their White peers.[11]

   Students who are chronically absent in both kindergarten and first grade are much less likely to be reading at grade level by third grade.[12] Students who are not reading at grade level by third grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school than students who are reading at grade-level[13]. In addition, high school attendance is a better dropout indicator than test scores. Finally, a student who is chronically absent for any year between eighth and 12th grade is more than seven times more likely to drop out of school.[14]

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[10] 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.
[11] Basch C.E. Healthier Students Are Better Learners: A Missing Link in School Reforms to Close the Achievement Gap. J Sch Health. 2010;81(10):593–8.
[12] 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.
[13] Hernandez, D. Double jeopardy: How third-grade reading skills and poverty influence high school graduation. Baltimore: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2011 April. p. 3.
[14] Utah Education Policy Center at the University of Utah. Chronic absence in Utah public schools, 2012.

3. Is the indicator actionable and within a school's control (versus something that only a district or other entity could impact)?

   Chronic absenteeism is actionable at the school level. When a concern is identified, there are many actions schools can take to reverse the trend. Below are two examples of New Jersey schools that have taken action and had success in reducing chronic absenteeism rates.

   A Paterson middle school developed a "community action plan" by engaging families to implement a targeted program that addressed neighborhood safety concerns. In addition, student mentors monitored attendance progress and provided varying incentives. The school's efforts led to a 76 percent decrease in the number of chronically absent students in just one year[15].

   A middle school in Trenton took a different approach. The school offered English classes to families of English learners, thus removing the burden on students to translate for their families during the school day. In addition, school leaders fostered a more positive school climate for students through positive messaging, promoting student-driven activities and offering small rewards for improved behavior and attendance. School leaders also maintained parent accountability and communication on student progress throughout the year. At the start of the intervention in September 2015, almost 25 percent of sixth through eighth graders were chronically absent. During one month, the schools absenteeism rate was reduced to just six percent.[16]

   Both examples demonstrate how chronic absenteeism can be turned around at the school level by engaging families, leveraging staff mentors for student support, utilizing data early and often, and providing a school culture and climate that encourages students to come to school every day. For more examples of this type of engagement in New Jersey schools, see: https://acnj.org/issues/early-learning/chronic_absenteeism/.

4. Does the data supporting the indicator fairly identify schools that are successful and schools that need additional support and improvement?

   Initial reviews of data from schools across the state reveal a wide range in chronic absenteeism rates. This range will allow NJDOE to focus on and provide support to schools with the highest rates of chronic absenteeism. This indicator, when cross-referenced with academic data, also will be valuable in identifying non-academic needs that impact student performance. Chronic absenteeism data can inform the most effective allocation of resources and supports for issues such as an unsafe school environment and chronic illnesses such as asthma.

[15] Rice, Cynthia. "Showing up Matters: The State of Chronic Absenteeism in New Jersey." (2015), p.8
[16] Zalkind, Cecelia. "Showing up Matters: The State of Chronic Absenteeism in New Jersey: 2nd Annual Report" (2016), p.6

5. Will data to measure the indicator be available and will that data meet the federal requirements for assessing the indicator? That is, can the data be disaggregated by subgroup, can it be applicable to all schools in a particular grade span, and is it supported by research that clearly demonstrates that performance and/or progress on the indicator are likely to increase student learning?

   NJDOE has reported data in a format that meets the requirements outlined above since the 2011-2012 school year.

   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 chronic absenteeism as its additional indicator of school quality and student success in the initial launch of the accountability system, 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. In fact, NJDOE has already begun follow-up conversations with stakeholders and ultimately plans to utilize feedback to refine definitions of each indicator, identify data collections that could lead to new indicators for school accountability or reporting purposes and measure the new accountability system's impact on closing the equity gap.

B. Subgroups

i. List the subgroups of students from each major racial and ethnic group in the State and, as applicable, describe any additional subgroups of students used in the accountability system.

As under *NCLB*, NJDOE plans to continue using the following racial and ethnic nomenclature for purposes of reporting: American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; Black or African American; Hispanic/Latino; Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander; White; and two or more races. These racial and ethnic subgroups 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, NJDOE also will consider the performance of economically disadvantaged students (defined as eligible for free and reduced-price lunch), students with disabilities and English 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 fitting into a major racial or ethnic group, a student may be classified as a member of one or more of the other subgroups: students with disabilities, English learners, and/or economically disadvantaged students.