



# STATE OF NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

## The Process for Identifying New Jersey Schools in Need of Support and Improvement

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) is responsible for upholding a federal law called the *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)*, which replaced the *No Child Left Behind Act (2001)*. The federal law provides funding so all children may receive equitable programs and services, and it sets forth minimum requirements, particularly around measuring and reporting school performance and providing support to the schools that need the most help.

To meet the new federal requirements, the NJDOE collaborated with parents, educators and broader community members to develop [New Jersey's ESSA State Plan](#), which was approved by the U.S. Department of Education in August 2017. The state plan describes New Jersey's ESSA school accountability system, which is being used to identify the schools where assistance is needed most so the state can provide resources to help those schools best support their students.

### What measures are included in New Jersey's school accountability system?

The accountability system under ESSA includes a number of indicators to measure how well schools are preparing students for success after high school. Indicators include: Academic Achievement, Academic Growth (for elementary and middle schools), Graduation Rate (for high schools), English Language Proficiency, and Chronic Absenteeism. School performance on these indicators is then combined to create summative scores for the entire school and for specific student groups. These scores are used to identify schools that are in need of targeted or comprehensive support and improvement.

In January 2018, the state designated a number of schools as being in need of targeted or comprehensive support and improvement. What does that mean?

- A school in need of **comprehensive support and improvement** is any school performing at or below the fifth percentile of those schools that receive Title I federal funds or any high school with a graduation rate less than 67%.
- A school in need of **targeted support and improvement** is any school with one or more student subgroups performing at or below the lowest 5% of schools that receive Title I funds (i.e., the "cut score" established for schools in need of comprehensive support and improvement). *Note:* Student subgroups are defined in federal law and include different racial and ethnic groups, English language learners, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students.

### How do I learn more about the performance of my school on the accountability indicators?

- Detailed information about each school in New Jersey is publicly available in the NJDOE's [School Performance Reports](#). This year (2018), the NJDOE will release a more reader-friendly companion to the in-depth reports.
- Visit the [NJDOE's ESSA webpage](#) for more information about New Jersey's accountability system.

### What will happen next and how can parents and families get involved?

- Reach out to your school and district to learn about opportunities for how parents, families and educators will work together to improve their schools.
- Schools and districts are required to engage with parents, families, educators and community members throughout the year to assess needs related to areas of weakness, identify strategies and resources that can impact improvement, create an improvement plan and timeline for completion. See the NJDOE's [Stakeholder Engagement Guide](#) for detailed descriptions of these requirements.

This information sheet is intended to supplement district and school communications about identifying New Jersey schools in need of support and improvement.

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Michael J. Scarano  
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Dear Parents and Families,

Our school district was recently notified by the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) that Bayshore Middle School has been identified as a school in need of *Targeted* support and improvement based on newly revised criteria.

Expectations for a high-quality education are outlined in the federal education law, the *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)*, and in New Jersey's corresponding state plan, which was developed in collaboration with parents, educators and broader community members throughout New Jersey. This state plan describes how the NJDOE must identify schools most in need of improvement and then work with the district to support schools so that each and every child can learn and thrive in the school community.

New Jersey holds all of its schools to a high standard of performance so that your child, and every child, receives the best education available. Our district and school educators and administrators remain committed to working with all of you in our community to help all of our students achieve success both inside and outside of the classroom.

In the coming months, we will work as a community to look in-depth at the academic results of our students and, together with the input we gather from our educators and families, we will build a plan with specific student goals, action steps and timelines for improvement. This gives us a critical opportunity to utilize the resources we have at school, at home and within our community to address the needs of our students along with the needs of our educators and families who support them.

The NJDOE remains committed to supporting our school community as we improve outcomes for our students. Specifically, the NJDOE will support us as we work with parents, families, teachers, and community groups to identify our needs. This partnership will help determine important strategies for improvement, and together we can create plans to improve.

Included with this letter is a one-page overview of New Jersey's process for identifying a school for improvement; this information may help answer some of your immediate questions.

I encourage you to learn more about the *Every Student Succeeds Act* by visiting the NJDOE's website at [www.state.nj.us/education/ESSA](http://www.state.nj.us/education/ESSA); in addition, the NJDOE homepage [www.state.nj.us/education](http://www.state.nj.us/education) provides links to other useful education information in the state of New Jersey.

You have my commitment, and that of all of our educators, that the improvement status of Bayshore Middle School will provide an opportunity for us as a community, to define our expectations for our students and to provide your child with the best opportunities to learn, grow, and succeed.

Thank you for your continued support as we take additional steps to make positive changes in your child's education.

Sincerely,

Michael Scarano

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