

ESSA Local Leaders’ Guide to Accountability Measures and Requirements



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Overview

The state accountability system is governed by the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).¹ The New York State Education Department (SED) is required to craft an accountability plan which is then subject to approval by the United States Department of Education to implement ESSA in New York State. This guide is designed to help local leaders understand why their schools have been identified for improvement, what steps the district is required to take, and the first steps recommended for local leaders.

How Districts Are Notified

The SED has released updated school accountability determinations under the current ESSA plan. These updates include changes to both the identification process and the terminology used for school designations.

School Designations

Schools are identified in two categories:

- **Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI):** Includes the lowest-performing 5% of schools statewide and high schools with graduation rates below 67%. These schools are identified every three years.
- **Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI):** Includes schools with consistently underperforming student subgroups. These schools are identified annually.

Performance Levels

The state accountability system assigns each performance indicator a level from one to four. Level 1 represents the lowest performance (bottom 10% statewide), while Level 4 represents the highest.

District Reporting

SED provides districts with an “Accountability Status Data” file. This report includes performance levels for each accountability indicator, disaggregated by student subgroup, for every school in the district.

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¹ See the NYSUT ESSA Fact Sheet for general information about ESSA – a link is included in the resource section.

Scenario Tables

A “scenario table” details how the indicators combined to identify schools for CSI or TSI status by identifying which scenario the school falls under. Any of the scenarios in the table below will result in CSI status for the “All students” group and TSI status for any subgroup – including economically disadvantaged, major racial/ethnic groups, English Learners, and students with disabilities (SWD).

CSI Scenario Tables

Elementary/ Middle School Identification Scenarios (CSI)					
Scenario	Weighted	Core	Student Growth	ELP	Attendance
1	Level 1	Level 1	At Least One Level 1		
2	Level 2	Level 1	Level 1	Level 1 or None*	
3	Level 1	Level 1	Level 2	Either Level 2	

*None: school does not have sufficient results (at least 20) to assign an accountability level.

High School Identification Scenarios (CSI)						
Scenario	Weighted	Core	Grad Rate	ELP	Attendance	CCCR**
1	Level 1	Level 1	Level 1	At Least One Level 1		
2	Level 1 or 2	Either Level 1		At Least One Level 1		
3	Level 1 or 2	Either Level 1		Level 1 or None	Level 1 or 2	

**CCCR: College, Career, and Civic Readiness

TSI Scenario Tables

Elementary/ Middle School Identification Scenarios (TSI)					
Scenario	Weighted	Core	Student Growth	ELP	Attendance
1	Level 1	Level 1	At Least One Level 1		
2	Level 2	Level 1	Level 1	Level 1 or 2 or None*	

*None: school does not have sufficient results (at least 20) to assign an accountability level.

High School Identification Scenarios (TSI)						
Scenario	Weighted	Core	Grad Rate	ELP	Attendance	CCCR*
1	Level 1	Level 1	Level 1	At Least One Level 1		
2	Level 1 or 2	Either Level 1		At Least One Level 1		

*CCCR: College, Career, and Civic Readiness

For links to the tables, see: [Understanding the New York State Accountability System under the Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\) for 2025–2026 Accountability Statuses Based on 2024–2025 Results](#)

Understanding the Data

Federal law requires states to identify certain schools for support. This includes the lowest-performing 5% of all schools, plus any high schools where fewer than 67% of students graduate. These schools are called Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) schools.

Most of the measures used to identify these schools are relative, which means a school’s performance is compared to how other schools are doing. Because of this, school leaders cannot

point to a specific score or level of student achievement and be sure their school will not be labeled as low performing. However, the performance levels still help show where districts should focus their improvement efforts.

Role of “n-size”

New York State now uses an “n-size” of 20 instead of 30, which is the minimum number of student results needed to measure how any group or subgroup of students is performing based on data from one year. This count is based on results from continuously enrolled students. For example, if one student takes the 4th grade English Language Arts (ELA), math, and science tests, that student counts as three results toward the n-size for combined academic measures. This can affect smaller schools or smaller student groups. When there are fewer students, the results of just a few students can have a bigger impact on the overall performance of the school or subgroup.

For additional information on the conditions used to determine a student’s accountability subgroup, see page 44 of Accountability Data Business Rules: [Understanding the New York State Accountability System under the Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\) for 2025–2026 Accountability Statuses Based on 2024–2025 Results](#)

Converting Raw Scores to Levels

Composite Performance: Weighted Average Achievement and Core Subject Performance

These indicators are measures of academic achievement on state assessments in ELA, math, and science. For high schools, this also includes state assessments in social studies. Several calculations and steps are used to create an achievement measure. These include:

1. Calculating performance indices for each student results by converting the raw score to a 1-4 performance levels
2. Weighing these indices (each level of performance is weighted differently)
3. Calculating two sets of results:
 - a. The weighted average achievement index, based on all continuously enrolled students
 - b. The core subject performance index, based on only those students who took the exam
4. The final performance index for both measures is then ranked against every other school. The final levels are assigned based on percentile rankings. Schools ranked in the lowest 10 % are at risk for CSI/TSI status.²

Composite Performance Rank	Composite Performance Level
0-10%	1
10.1-50%	2
50.1-75%	3
>75%	4

For a more detailed explanation, see: [NYSSED Reimagine Phase Weighted Average Achievement/Core Subject Performance Fact Sheet \(Elementary/Middle School\)](#) and [NYSSED Weighted Average Achievement/Core Subject Performance Fact Sheet \(High School\)](#)

² The NYSUT ESSA fact Sheet includes a complete step-by-step description of this process.

Impact of Opt-Outs on Accountability Status

In Elementary and Middle School, the Weighted Average Achievement indicator is calculated for an accountability subgroup using the number of continuously enrolled students with valid Grades 3-8 ELA, math, and science assessment results combined. If a school tests fewer than 95% of its students, the denominator used for the accountability formula becomes 95% of the total enrollment, rather than the lower number of actual test-takers. This increases the denominator, which lowers the school's performance index. A lower performance index may lead to identification for additional support.

In High School, the Weighted Average Achievement indicator is calculated for each accountability cohort using the number of students that are required to take the ELA, math, science, and social studies assessments combined. Students without a valid score are included as non-participants in participation rate calculations. The number of non-participants may fall below the 95% threshold which can impact a school's accountability status.

Student Growth for ELA and Math (Elementary/Middle School)

The growth model uses one year of data for current students in Grades 4–8 who are continuously enrolled. These students must have taken the state test in the previous grade during the prior school year and again in the next grade in the current school year.

Each student's results are compared to those of similar students across the state. To calculate growth, results from both the current and prior school years in ELA and math are combined and then divided by the total number of results to determine a mean growth percentile. Using data from more years would help make the model less sensitive to sudden changes. As with many growth models, most schools fall near the middle of a bell curve, so the performance level ranges are narrow, and schools can easily move between them from one year to the next.

Mean Growth Percentile	Level
45% or less	1
45.1 – 50%	2
50.1 – 54%	3
Greater than 54%	4

For more information, see [NYSED Reimagine Phase Student Growth Fact Sheet](#)

Graduation Rate (High School)

At the high school level, accountability is based on graduation rates instead of student growth. This measure is the unweighted average of the 4-year, 5-year, and 6-year cohort graduation rates.

Cohort Definitions:

- **4-year cohort:** students who enter Grade 9 and students with disabilities who turn 17 and are ungraded four years prior to the reporting year are in this cohort.
- **5-year cohort:** students who enter Grade 9 and students with disabilities who turn 17 and are ungraded five years prior to the reporting year are in this cohort.
- **6-year cohort:** students who enter Grade 9 and students with disabilities who turn 17 and are ungraded six years prior to the reporting year are in this cohort.

Once the unweighted average graduation rate is calculated, schools are ranked in ascending order. Graduation rate levels are then assigned based on where schools fall in the ranking.

Statewide Rank-Based Cut Points	
Percentile	Level
In the lowest 10%	1
Between 10.1-50%	2
Between 50.1-75%	3
Greater than 75%	4

For more information, see [NYSED Reimagine Phase Graduation Rate Fact Sheet](#)

English Language Proficiency (ELP)

This indicator measures the progress of ELLs in meeting individual targets on the NYS English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT). The state uses a matrix to determine student progress. The method compares a student’s performance in the current year to the initial year of ELL identification and awards credit if a student remains on track based on the initial trajectory.

Success Ratio	ELP Level
0-.49	1
.50-.99	2
1.0-1.24	3
1.25+	4

For more information, see [NYSED Reimagine Phase English Language Proficiency Fact Sheet](#)

Attendance

The new attendance indicator replaces the chronic absenteeism indicator. All students through grade 12 who are enrolled for at least 30 instructional days and in attendance for at least one of those days, will be assigned at an attendance level based on the percentage of instructional days attended. Level 1 and 2 encapsulate chronically absent students, with students attending less than 85% of the time being assigned to level 1 and students attending 85.1-90% of the time assigned to level 2. Students attending school 90.1-95% are level 3 and above 95.1% attendance is a level 4. Suspensions are not counted as absences.

Elementary/Middle All Students Group	
Attendance Index	Attendance Level
0-133.5	1
133.6-191	2
191.1-208	3
208.1-250	4

For more information, see [New York State Reimagine Phase Attendance Fact Sheet](#)

College, Career, and Civic Readiness (CCCR)

CCCR measures the percentage of students who demonstrate college, career, and civic readiness. This is determined using indicators such as diplomas earned, credentials, advanced course credits, and participation in career and technical education (CTE) programs, along with other similar measures. These indicators are weighted differently, meaning some contribute more to the overall measure than others.

Rank	CCCR Level
In the lowest 10%	1
Between 10.1-50%	2
Between 50.1-75%	3
Greater than 75%	4

For more information, see [NYSED Reimagine Phase CCCR Fact Sheet](#)

Measures of Interim Progress (MIPs) and Long-Term Goals (LTGs)

Under ESSA, New York State is required to establish long-term goals (LTGs) and measures of interim progress (MIPs) to help schools and districts set goals and track progress in closing achievement gaps.

Long-Term Goals (LTGs)

NYSED has set statewide performance targets for each required indicator. These goals are expressed differently depending on the type of measure:

- ELA and Math (Achievement Index): Target of 200. This is an index score, not a percentage. It reflects overall student performance levels across assessments, with higher scores indicating stronger performance.
- Graduation Rate (These are percentages of students graduating, representing the state's expectation that nearly all students will graduate, with additional time allowed for some students):
 - 95% (4-year cohort)
 - 96% (5-year cohort)
 - 97% (6-year cohort)
- English Language Proficiency (ELP): 95% of students meeting progress expectations. This measures the percentage of English Language Learners making expected annual progress toward proficiency.

Schools and districts are expected to meet these long-term goals within a five-year period, ending in the 2028–2029 school year. New long-term goals will be established before the start of the 2029–2030 school year.

Measures of Interim Progress (MIPs)

MIPs are the annual targets set along the five-year timeline toward meeting the LTGs. Each year includes incremental progress benchmarks, ensuring that schools and student subgroups are on track to meet the long-term goals by the end of the 2028–2029 school year.

For tables for NYS MIPs and LTGs for ELA, math, graduation rate, and English language proficiency can be found in the Appendix of the following document: [Understanding the New York State Accountability System under the Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\) for 2025– 2026 Accountability Statuses Based on 2024–2025 Results](#)

Interventions for CSI and TSI Schools

Under ESSA, there is a greater focus on resource equity and local control. Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) schools receive targeted support to improve student outcomes. Some tools from the previous system remain in place, but SED now provides technical assistance, training, and monitors progress rather than mandating specific interventions or models.

If schools do not make progress, SED escalates interventions, and the Receivership law continues to apply. For Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) schools, SED requires many of the same evaluation procedures but leaves it to districts to determine appropriate interventions.

CSI School Intervention

Intervention	Requirements
<i>Identification</i>	The state reviews school performance data on all indicators, and the lowest-performing schools (lowest 5% statewide plus high schools with graduation rates below 67%) are designated as CSI once every three years
<i>Diagnostic Review</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SED appoints an Integrated Intervention Team (IIT): SED staff, a district member, and an Outside Educational Expert (OEE) • IIT uses the DTSDE rubric to guide a diagnostic review and continuation plan development • Comprehensive review also includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ESSA indicators and other relevant measures (e.g., teacher absenteeism) ○ Resource audit: professional development, use of time, space, and staff ○ Parent, staff, and student surveys
<i>Continuation Plan</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first year is a planning year to develop the plan • No specific model required and extended learning time is no longer mandated, but the plan must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Address findings from the needs assessment ○ Include Annual Achievement Progression targets for ESSA and additional indicators identified by the state. The district must be included in the plan and will be assigned progress goals by the state ○ Be submitted to the Commissioner by July 1st and updated annually

Intervention	Requirements
<i>Funding</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The state will provide base-level allocation in year 1 • The state will establish a tiered funding system in years 2 and 3 • Schools must set aside \$2,000 in year one (up to \$6,000 by year 3) for a Parent Participatory Budgeting Process or select other SED-approved parent engagement methods
<i>Evidence-Based Intervention</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school must select and implement at least one evidence-based intervention that has demonstrated a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes • SED provides guidance through direction to clearinghouses that have identified evidence-based interventions. SED also may provide training on state-selected interventions. Schools are not required to choose from these clearinghouses or attend the trainings
<i>Professional Development and Training</i>	This must be job-embedded, on-going, and linked to the needs assessment, APPR/STEPS, and continuation plan
<i>Teacher Transfer</i>	Only Effective and Highly Effective teachers may transfer into the school
<i>Progress Monitoring</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools must review and report on plan implementation through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Quarterly reports of progress on indicators ○ Annual Resource Audit ○ Annual Parent, staff, and student survey • Schools not making progress after year 1 must submit a <i>Leadership Support and Needs Assessment</i>, a structured review of how the district will support its school leaders (not limited to principals) • Districts may choose to do a more thorough comprehensive review in year 2 • Schools failing to make progress in year 3 must complete a comprehensive review (unless completed in year 2)
<i>Surveys</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Districts must conduct Parent, Teacher, and Student Surveys • Districts may develop or select a survey instrument; SED approved surveys are optional
<i>Public School Choice</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Districts determine school choice unless a school declines for 2 consecutive years, at which point school choice must be offered • If no schools are in Good Standing, a TSI school may be offered
<i>Exit Criteria</i>	<p>A school exits CSI status if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is not re-identified when the list is run again in 3 years, or • It performs for 2 consecutive years above identification thresholds, meaning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Composite performance index and growth/graduation index are both Level 2 or higher, or

Intervention	Requirements
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Both achievement and growth/graduation improve from identification, with either growth/graduation or achievement Level 2 or higher, and no other indicators are Level 1
<i>Receivership</i>	Schools re-identified as CSI on the next list are placed into Receivership

TSI School Intervention

Intervention	Requirements
<i>Identification</i>	The state reviews school performance data on all indicators, and the lowest-performing schools (lowest 5% statewide plus high schools with graduation rates below 67%) are designated as TSIs annually
<i>Diagnostic Review</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● SED appoints an Integrated Intervention Team (IIT): SED staff, a district member, and an Outside Educational Expert (OEE) ● District completes a comprehensive review that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ DTSDE review ○ Review of state-determined indicators ○ Resource audit: professional development, use of time, space, and staff
<i>Continuation Plan</i>	The plan must address the findings of the needs assessment and is developed in consultation with stakeholders
<i>Progress Monitoring</i>	The district is required to conduct an annual Progress Needs assessment or another comprehensive assessment
<i>Surveys</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Districts must conduct Parent, Teacher, and Student Surveys. ● Districts may develop or select a survey instrument; SED approved surveys are optional
<i>Public School Choice</i>	Not required
<i>Exit Criteria</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A TSI school remains on the list even if it is not re-identified in a given year ● To exit TSI status, a school must perform above the identification thresholds for two consecutive years ● There is no limit on the number of schools that can be designated as TSI
<i>Reidentification</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● TSI schools that have not shown enough improvement over 2 years will be evaluated and could be identified as an Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI) school ● If a school remains an ATSI school after three consecutive years, it will be identified as CSI

Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness (DTSDE) Rubric

The DTSDE tool is a rubric that is divided into six areas of focus called tenets. The rubric will be used by the review team over a one-to-three-day period (depending on the size of the school and accountability status) to identify areas of strengths and weakness. These will be used to create goals and to inform the continuation plan. The six tenets are:

- Tenet 1: District Leadership and Capacity
- Tenet 2: School Leader Practices and Decisions
- Tenet 3: Curriculum Development and Support
- Tenet 4: Teacher Practices and Decisions
- Tenet 5: Student Social and Emotional Developmental Health
- Tenet 6: Family and Community Engagement

Below are some of the components of the DTSDE review process that directly impact teachers and support staff:

- *Staff-Level Focus Groups.* The review process will include multiple focus groups. These include teacher meetings with a pre-selected group of teachers that should represent all grades across subject areas. Support staff will also participate in a focus group meeting that should include how the school is using its student support services along with core teachers to support students' social, emotional development and health, and how community services are engaged.
- *Observation of grade/subject-level teacher team meetings.* Reviewers will observe a meeting where teachers look at student work and create an action plan. The intent is for this to be a teacher-led discussion. The reviewers will ask clarifying questions prior to and after the meeting.
- *Classroom Visitations.* Each reviewer will visit seven to ten classes. After each visit, the reviewer will ask the teacher two or three questions. The purpose is to ascertain how students are being instructed and make connections to curriculum, strategies, and practices compared to the goals set by the teacher and school. This is not linked to the APPR/STEPS process.
- *Surveys.* Annual surveys of teachers, parents, and students in Grades 3-5 and 6-12 are mandated under ESSA. The surveys are intended to provide feedback on each of the following areas: school-wide systems, organization and climate, school leadership, curriculum and instruction, social-emotional developmental health, and family engagement.

ESSA and Receivership

Identification as a CSI school does not have the same implications as Receivership, although it does potentially place a building on the path to Receivership. The superintendent is not given authority to supersede Board of Education decisions, require changes to building staff, or implement a Receiver collective bargaining agreement in a CSI school. While New York enacted a Receivership law over ten years ago, ESSA does not require states to have a Receivership program. New CSI schools that are re-identified as CSI schools in three years will fall under Receivership. For the 2025-2026 list, schools that are not reidentified as CSI will be released from receivership at the end of the 2025-26 school year. Newly identified Receivership schools fall under receivership immediately. The next list will be generated in the 2028-29 school year.

For more information on Receivership law an updated Receivership Fact Sheet can be found [here](#).

Advice to Local Leaders

Because the accountability system relies on relative performance scales and a small “n” size of 20, outcomes may be unpredictable. Schools that expect to be in good standing could be designated as CSI, while other schools may exit the CSI or TSI lists as new schools are added. Additionally, the TSI list is expected to grow over time, since there is no limit on the number of schools that can be identified and designations occur annually. NYSUT recommends that local leaders take the following steps:

- Review the data and know which indicators led to the school being identified.
- Prepare members for the DTSDE review and survey. Local leaders should be involved in decisions regarding who will participate in the focus groups.
- Continuation (formerly intervention) plans must be developed collaboratively. Recruit members to serve that have expertise in the areas identified for improvement.
- Review the professional development plan for alignment to the continuation plan.
- Review the quarterly reports to know where you are making progress.

Additional Resources

- NYSUT ESSA Fact Sheet
- Accountability Resources and Fact Sheets: <https://www.nysed.gov/accountability/school-and-district-accountability-resources-and-data>
- Link to SED DTSDE Tool and information: [DTSDE Resources | New York State Education Department](#)
- SED ESSA webpage: <http://www.nysed.gov/essa>
- SED Receivership webpage: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/oisr/>