



STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Local Stakeholder Engagement Under *The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)*: A Guide for District and School Leaders



December 2017

Thank You!

This guide represents the shared vision that all New Jersey students be provided with a quality education through the collective involvement of school, district, and community leaders. The information within this district guide is based on the collaborative efforts of local partners throughout New Jersey. In particular, we would like to thank the following stakeholders:

- Bridgeton School District
- Black Horse Pike Regional High School District
- Cherry Hill Education Association
- Mainland Regional High School District
- Middletown Township School District
- New Jersey Association of Federal Program Administrators
- New Jersey Association of School Administrators
- New Jersey Educators Association
- New Jersey Parent Teacher Association
- New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association
- New Jersey School Boards Association
- New Jersey Title I Committee of Practitioners
- Newark Public Schools
- Parent Education Organizing Council
- Paterson Education Fund
- Perth Amboy School District
- Roselle School District
- Statewide Parent Advocacy Network
- Vineland School District
- Westampton Township School District
- Wildwood School District
- Woodbridge Township School District

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Introduction:

ESSA Stakeholder Engagement in New Jersey

The following section explains the local context of *ESSA* stakeholder engagement.

Contents include:

- Purpose
- Theory of Action
- Using This Guide
- Developing an Annual School Plan in Collaboration with Stakeholders
- Funding Stakeholder Engagement
- Evidence of Stakeholder Engagement

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide district and school leaders with a guide for ways to engage local stakeholders to address the needs of students in an ongoing and meaningful way, particularly as it relates to the requirements under *ESSA*. Information provided in this guide is designed to align to the Annual School Planning process required for most New Jersey schools, including schools:

- Identified as in need of comprehensive and targeted support; or
- Operating a Title I schoolwide or targeted assistance program.

As a support to district and school leaders, this guide sets forth federal and state engagement requirements (Section 1) and offers strategies for consulting with diverse groups of stakeholders (Sections 2 and 3).

Meaningful Engagement in New Jersey

Educators, school, district and systems leaders are tasked with the extraordinary responsibility of ensuring all of their students are equally provided a high-quality education. The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE), in collaboration with stakeholders from across the state, considers the process of engaging stakeholders as an essential component of student success.

Annually engaging stakeholders to analyze data, assess needs and identify root causes, write and implement local plans, and monitor progress is a strong best practice to effectively improve schools. Consultation with diverse sets of stakeholders is also required under *ESSA* whenever a local education agency (LEA) receives federal funding.¹

Beyond Consultation:

Meaningful engagement means: representation of all stakeholder groups in the process of developing and implementing local plans for improving outcomes for students. In New Jersey, meaningful engagement, beyond mere consultation, drove a more sustainable and representative *ESSA* State Plan development process. Therefore, the NJDOE encourages schools and districts to integrate meaningful engagement in their annual planning process.

Recommended strategies were developed by stakeholders and NJDOE staff members who collaborated to develop the [ESSA State Plan](#) and informed by successful experiences from school districts in New Jersey and across the country.

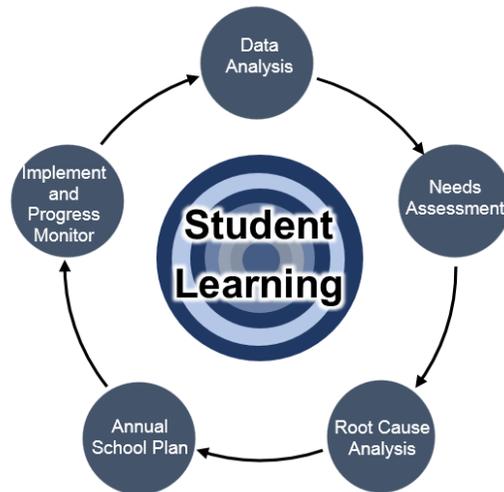
These experiences show that when district, school and systems leaders approach stakeholder engagement as a mandated, superficial process, they are less likely to achieve their goals. However, when leaders encourage and invite stakeholders who are integrated in the local community to contribute to policy decisions about schools, students are more likely to be supported and achieve success.

¹ Section 1112 (a)(1)(A); For several funding sources, *ESSA* includes and expands upon previous stakeholder engagement activities that were previously required under *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)*. (*ESSA* replaces *NCLB* in reauthorizing the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)* of 1965 - meant to ensure that all students have equitable access to high-quality educational opportunities.

Developing an Annual School Plan in Collaboration with Stakeholders

The NJDOE encourages engagement that is strategically integrated into a district's school-level planning process. The New Jersey Annual School Planning Process² (Figure 1) serves as a framework for long-term, sustained improvement, aligns to LEA's³ annual plans, and illustrates a model of continuous school improvement that engages stakeholders, including families, staff and community members, at every step in a transparent and responsive way.

Figure 1: New Jersey Annual School Planning Process



How school-level teams can engage stakeholders at each step of the process:

- **Data Analysis:** The first step is analyzing both quantitative as well as qualitative data from the current and previous school year with stakeholders.
- **Needs Assessment:** Work closely with stakeholders to review previous and current practices and identify areas of strength, as well as areas in need of improvement and narrow the focus to three to four primary areas of focus.
- **Root Cause Analysis:** Leverage stakeholders to look below surface causes and focus on the sources that contribute to the areas of need.
- **Annual School Plan:** Seek input to create the plan, set three to four SMART goals to be the focus for the entire school year, and establish checkpoints for monitoring progress.
- **Progress Monitoring:** Inform stakeholders of progress at established checkpoints and engaging stakeholders along the way; reflect on the annual plan and school progress throughout the year.

² In January 2018, the state's new consolidated school plan (New Jersey Annual School Planning Process) is scheduled to replace the former Title I Schoolwide Plan and the former School Improvement Plan for Focus and Priority schools. Additional information and guidance regarding the framework is forthcoming following the publication of this stakeholder guidance.

³ Local Educational Agency (LEA) is a term used throughout ESSA and will therefore be used in this document when referencing ESSA requirements. Otherwise, the more colloquial "school and district" is used.

Timeline for Local Planning

Throughout the year, School Performance Reports and other data can and should be shared with stakeholders to further engage and empower families, educators and students.

Understanding the fluid nature of a school year, Tables 1 and 2 below demonstrates a recommended timeline aligned to the typical budget, NJDOE publically released data, and the Annual Planning Process. Conversations around data drive the New Jersey Annual School Planning Process and efforts to continually enhance and expand educational opportunities for all students.

Table 1: Engagement and Examples of Available Data

Annually	Fall	Winter	Spring	Summer
Action	<i>Prior to school year, plan outreach that will increase stakeholder participation. Inform community and begin to engage stakeholders.</i>	<i>Examine budget for the upcoming school year. Re-assess the path forward once ESSA allocations are made to begin developing a new plan alongside stakeholders.</i>	<i>Adjust and finalize a plan for the upcoming year alongside stakeholders. Submit new annual ESEA LEA plan in EWEG or Annual School Plan.</i>	
Available Data	<i>ESEA School Accountability Profiles</i>	<i>School Performance Reports are available online. Schools are identified by NJDOE for Comprehensive or Targeted support.</i>	<i>ESEA Funding Allocations are made from State to LEAs.</i>	

Table 2: NJ Annual School Planning Process

Year	Fall	Winter	Spring	Summer
Year A	Begin data analysis	Conduct needs assessment	Identify root causes	Develop Annual School Plan
Year B	Implement Annual School Plan	Progress Monitor	Progress Monitor	Progress Monitor
	Begin data analysis	Conduct needs assessment	Identify root causes	Develop Annual School Plan

This timeline begins in the 2017-18 school year. However, implementation and additional assessment and planning is iterative. Depending on how schools are identified, schools and districts will need to align their planning processes to specific timelines for improvement.

This timeline will be updated with additional guidance in the winter of 2018.

Funding Stakeholder Engagement

If districts can demonstrate a need upon submitting their annual *ESSA* application in the summer, *ESSA* funds may be later used to support stakeholder engagement activities in addition to funding instructional programs and services. For example, districts may hire a community outreach coordinator to help design participation programs and events for families of English language learners (ELLs) families⁴ using Title III funds. For additional information, see the NJDOE guidance document, [Unlocking Your Federal Funds](#), and see [Appendix G](#) for NJDOE contacts to call or email with questions.

Using This Guide and Disclaimer

To best support the entire Annual School Planning Process, this guide includes **requirements for specific funding sources** and **recommended strategies** for meeting the requirements. Scope, strategies, and templates are not required, but can be referenced when implementing effective and yearlong consultation with unique stakeholders. Whether a district chooses to implement the suggested strategies will not impact receipt of federal funds.

Although this guide discusses *ESSA* requirements, it is intended solely to provide general information and does not constitute legal advice. The NJDOE does not provide legal advice, and any information contained herein should not be relied upon as such. The NJDOE encourages district officials to consult their board attorney for additional information.

Next Steps

Over the coming months and into 2018, the NJDOE will work with stakeholders, districts and schools to identify additional templates, examples and best practices occurring throughout the state. Those additional resources will be continuously added to the [NJDOE website](#). The NJDOE will be delivering stakeholder engagement technical assistance to districts throughout 2018 as they embark on their own implementation efforts.

⁴ *ESEA* as amended by *ESSA* Section 3115(c)(3)(A) and (d)(6).



Section 1:

ESSA Stakeholder Engagement Requirements

Under *ESSA*, districts and schools are required to write an annual plan that is strategically designed to better support students. *ESSA*'s focus on engaging all stakeholders provides school and district leaders with a chance to enhance their structures and practices with engagement of all stakeholders — with particular attention to those who have been historically less connected to their work — as a key priority in developing, implementing and monitoring the progress of the annual plan.

Understanding stakeholder engagement requirements in the law is a necessary step before school planning can begin. The following section includes upfront *ESSA* stakeholder engagement requirements naming specific individuals, groups, and activities under the law.

Contents include:

- Stakeholder Engagement Requirements Under Law
- Required Stakeholder Groups: Titles I-A, II-A, III-A, and IV-A
- Required Stakeholder Engagement Activities: Titles I-A, II-A, III-A, and IV-A
- Specialized Areas of Stakeholder Engagement
 - Comprehensive and Targeted Schools
 - Nonpublic Schools

Stakeholder Engagement Requirements Under ESSA

The following two tables summarize minimum stakeholder engagement requirements by funding source. **Table 1.A** details which stakeholder groups must be consulted in the development and implementation of a district’s ESSA plan. For an expanded list of potential stakeholders, see [Appendix C](#).

Table 1.A: Required Stakeholder Groups

Stakeholders	Title IA Citation: §1112(a)(1)(A), §1112(b)(7-10)	Title IIA Citation: §2102(b)(3)(A) and §2102(b)(2)(D)	Title IIIA Citation: §3116(b)(4)(C)	Title IVA Citation: §4106(c)(1-2)
Teachers	x	x	x	x
Principals	x	x	x	x
Other school leaders	x	x	x	x
Parents/family members	x	x	x	x
Paraprofessionals	x	x	n/a	n/a
Specialized instructional support personnel	x	x	n/a	x
Administrators	x	n/a	x	n/a
Other Appropriate School Personnel	x	x	n/a	n/a
Nonpublic Schools	x	x	x	x
Community Partners/Community-Based Organizations/Community Members	x	x	x	x
Researchers	n/a	n/a	x	n/a
Early childhood education programs (where applicable)	x	n/a	n/a	n/a
Institutions of higher education (where applicable)	x	n/a	x	n/a
Employers (where applicable)	x	n/a	n/a	n/a
Local government representatives (which may include a local law enforcement agency, local juvenile court, local child welfare agency, or local public housing agency)	n/a	n/a	n/a	x
Indian tribes or tribal organizations (where applicable)	n/a	n/a	n/a	x
Other stakeholders/other organizations with relevant experience	n/a	x	x	n/a
Public or private entities	n/a	n/a	x	n/a

Table 1.B provides the relevant statutory language of required stakeholder engagement activities. **Bold** text highlights some of the collaborative activities required by law.

Table 1.B: Required Stakeholder Engagement Activities: Titles I-A, II-A, III-A, and IV-A

Funding Source	Activities
<p style="text-align: center;">Title I-A (Receiving Title I Funds) §1112(a)(1)(A) §1112(b)(7-10) §1116</p>	<p>LEA plan must be developed with timely and meaningful consultation with teachers, principals, other school leaders, paraprofessionals, specialized instructional support personnel, charter school leaders (in a local educational agency that has charter schools), administrators (including administrators of programs described in other parts of this title), other appropriate school personnel, and with parents of children in schools served under this part.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● LEA plan must describe or include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The strategy the local educational agency will use to implement effective parent and family engagement; ○ If applicable, how the local educational agency will support, coordinate, and integrate services provided under this part with early childhood education programs at the local educational agency or individual school level, including plans for the transition of participants in such programs to local elementary school programs; and ○ How the local educational agency will implement strategies to facilitate effective transitions for students from middle grades to high school and from high school to postsecondary education including, if applicable, through coordination with institutions of higher education, employers, and other local partners. ○ The LEA’s written parent and family engagement policy (see following section). <p>LEA must conduct outreach to all parents and family members and implements programs, activities, and procedures for the involvement of parents and family members. Such programs, activities, and procedures shall be planned and implemented with meaningful consultation with parents of participating children.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">Title I-A (Written parent and family engagement policy) §1116(a)(2), §1116(a)(3)(A)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each LEA must develop jointly with, agree on with, and distribute to, parents and family members of participating children a written parent and family engagement policy. The policy shall describe how the agency will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Establish expectations and objectives for meaningful parent and family involvement; ○ Involve parents and family members in jointly developing the district plan, and the development of support and improvement plans; ○ Provide the support necessary to assist and build the capacity of all participating schools within the district in planning and implementing effective parent and family involvement activities; ○ To the extent feasible, coordinate and integrate all ongoing parent and family engagement strategies; ○ Conduct, with the meaningful involvement of parents and family members, an annual evaluation of the content and effectiveness of the parent and family engagement policy; ○ Use the findings of such evaluation to design evidence-based strategies for more effective parental involvement; and ○ Involve parents in the activities of the schools served under this section of law. <p>LEAs that receive \$500,000 or more must reserve at least 1% of funds for parent and family engagement, 90% of which must be distributed to schools.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Title I-A (Applying for a Schoolwide Program) §1114(b)(2)</p>	<p>A school operating a schoolwide program shall develop a comprehensive plan with the involvement of parents and other members of the community to be served. Others include individuals who will carry out such plan, including teachers, principals, other school leaders, paraprofessionals present in the school, administrators (including administrators of programs described in other parts of this title), the local educational agency, to the extent feasible, tribes and tribal organizations present in the community, and, if appropriate, specialized instructional support personnel, technical assistance providers, school staff, if the plan relates to a secondary school, students, and other individuals determined by the school.</p> <p>The plan must be available to the LEA, parents, and the public ... in an understandable and uniform format and, to the extent practicable, provided in a language that the parents can understand.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">Title I (Applying for a Targeted Assistance Program) §1112(b)(9) §1115(b)(2)(E)</p>	<p>The LEA plan must describe how teachers and school leaders, in consultation with parents, administrators, paraprofessionals, and specialized instructional support personnel, in schools operating a targeted assistance school program, will identify the eligible children most in need of services. The school must implement strategies to increase the involvement of parents of eligible children.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Title II-A §2102(b)(3) §2102(b)(2)(D)</p>	<p>LEAs must consult with a range of stakeholders in developing applications for Title II formula funds, seek advice on how to improve activities, and describe how data and ongoing consultation will be used to continuously improve Title II local activities.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Title III-A §3115(c)(3)(A), §3116(b)(3), §3316(b)(4)(C)</p>	<p>LEAs must use Title III funds for parent and family engagement activities related to English learners, among other required uses of funds.</p> <p>The LEA plan must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe how the LEA will promote parent, family, and community engagement in the education of English learners <p>Contain assurances that the district consulted with teachers, researchers, school administrators, parents and family members, community members, public or private entities, and institutions of higher education, in developing and implementing its Title III plan.</p>

For additional NJDOE Title I Parent and Family Engagement resources, see [Appendix A](#).

Under *ESSA*, there are additional areas where stakeholder engagement is required, and therefore is applicable to certain schools. See [Appendix A](#) for nonpublic consultation resources.

Table 1.C: Specialized Areas of Stakeholder Engagement

School	Activities
<p>Comprehensive or Targeted Support and Improvement Plans §1111(d)(1)(B), §1111(d)(2)(B)</p>	<p>A comprehensive or targeted support and improvement plan developed by the LEA shall be developed in partnership with stakeholders, including principals and other school leaders, teachers, and parents.</p>
<p>Nonpublic Schools §8501(c)(1-5)</p>	<p>LEAs shall consult with appropriate private school officials.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Such agency and private school officials shall both have the goal of reaching agreement on how to provide equitable and effective programs for eligible private school children. • This consultation shall occur before the agency makes any decision that affects the opportunities of eligible private school children, teachers, and other educational personnel to participate in programs and shall continue throughout the implementation and assessment of activities under this section. • Each local educational agency shall maintain in the agency’s records, and provide to the State educational agency involved, a written affirmation signed by officials of each participating private school that the meaningful consultation required by this section has occurred.



Section 2:

Guidelines for Strategic Stakeholder Engagement

Districts and schools have a responsibility to ensure their stakeholders are engaged in an ongoing process that is well-defined and results in educational equity for all students. Planning and developing structures to optimize such engagement can be daunting. However, regardless of a school or district's level of expertise with stakeholders, *ESSA* presents an opportunity to incorporate more meaningful engagement as a part of the annual school planning process.

The following section includes a recommended operational approach (planning, engagement, and ongoing engagement) for annual stakeholder engagement, along with questions to consider that are designed to facilitate meaningful consultation.

Contents include:

Building an Engagement Strategy Around Local Planning:

- **Planning: *Organizing Engagement***
 - Build a vision for stakeholder engagement
 - Establish internal leadership teams
 - Identify stakeholders
 - Identify issues/topics to engage around
 - Create/improve an online presence
- **Engagement: *Developing a Local Plan***
 - Conduct outreach
 - Inform stakeholders
 - Listen to input before decisions are made, and acknowledge or use it
 - Communicate early and often
- **Ongoing Engagement: *Sustaining School Improvement***
 - Commit to ongoing engagement
 - Evaluate your strategy and improve over time
- **Effective Ongoing Engagement**

Building an Engagement Strategy Around Local Planning

Local planning for LEAs and schools requires a deliberate strategy for including stakeholders.

It is essential for local leaders – school principals, district superintendents, community partners and others – to collaborate around how to best support students. Districts and schools need to be proactive and thoughtful about including stakeholders in every step of the local planning process: to analyze data, assess need and identify root causes, write and implement annual plans, and progress monitor.

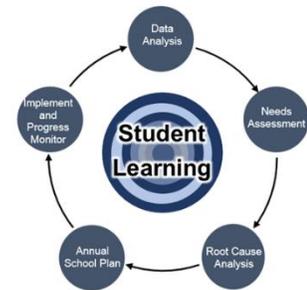


Figure 1: New Jersey Annual School Planning Process

This engagement strategy should include planning for engagement, engagement around local planning, and ongoing engagement to sustain community involvement in continuous school improvement.

Planning: Organizing Engagement

Before the school year begins, it is important to build a plan for stakeholder engagement that meets requirements and the intent of the law (i.e., creating a plan that includes stakeholders in a meaningful and ongoing way).

At the beginning of the year:

- Focus on planning and outreach that will increase stakeholder participation.
- Inform the community as you implement and start to monitor new programs and services.
- Engage stakeholders to begin **data analysis**.

○ **Build a vision for stakeholder engagement**

Use this opportunity to commit to meaningful engagement of the whole community, beginning with a vision for what meaningful engagement with diverse groups of stakeholders will look like.

Questions to consider include:

- ✓ What is our vision for what an engaged community looks like?
- ✓ What assumptions do we have about who can/can't participate and why? How can we support breaking down those assumptions?
- ✓ What does collaborative local planning look like in our school/district?

○ **Establish leadership teams (internal staff and stakeholders)**

Identify staff (community engagement liaisons, teachers, curriculum directors) who will serve as the main contact with external stakeholders and lead the engagement efforts. School and district leaders may even work with partner organizations to help build capacity.

Effective Engagement Strategies When Establishing Leadership Teams

- Designate Family or Community Liaisons/Leaders to support engagement efforts, including attending educational events and disseminating various communications.
- Enlist staff that have strong relationships with families and other stakeholders.
- Make processes and procedures for plan development publicly available and accessible to all stakeholders – including when and how stakeholders will have the opportunity to engage.

Questions to consider include:

- ✓ What partners/staff can we work with who are closely tied to specific stakeholder groups and could potentially serve as district ambassadors?
- ✓ Do we need to recruit additional partners/district leadership to connect with stakeholder groups with whom the district leadership is not closely tied?
- ✓ What can we do to ensure partners/district leadership are successful in their engagement efforts?
- ✓ Is our leadership team well-versed in *ESSA* terms needed for stakeholder engagement? (See [Appendix D](#))

○ **Identify stakeholders**

Shifts in policy or practice as a result of *ESSA* will impact all student groups, including historically underserved students such as students of color, English language learners, Native American students, those with disabilities, economically disadvantaged, and students experiencing homelessness or foster care. Advocates/representatives of each of these populations should be represented, in addition to families/guardians, school leaders, teachers, district staff, food service and transportation staff, and higher education institutions.

Effective Engagement Strategies When Identifying Stakeholders

- Refer to [Section 1](#) and [Appendix C](#) for stakeholders to engage
- Enlist stakeholders not usually involved in the planning process
- Determine which stakeholders will be most involved in the planning process
- Maintain an internal list of stakeholder contacts (name, email, phone, organization)
- Publicize plan development information and make it accessible to all stakeholders—including when and how stakeholders will have the opportunity to engage.

Questions to consider include:

- ✓ Which stakeholders are needed at the table?
- ✓ Are we inviting those who have not traditionally been included?
- ✓ Which stakeholders will be able to provide a broader perspective?

○ Identify issues/topics to engage around

Whether it's budgeting, attendance, professional development, assessment scores or schedules, stakeholders are familiar with the issues that impact academic improvement. To develop trust and effective engagement around targeted questions, school and district leaders should take every opportunity to learn more about issues that matter most to families, students, staff and community members. This key information will help drive the development of the plan.

Questions to consider include:

- ✓ What do we know that matters to each group of stakeholders?
- ✓ What questions are stakeholders most likely to ask about the district's/school's implementation of *ESSA*?
- ✓ What are the most pressing needs based on our data that must be addressed to lead to better outcomes?

○ Create/improve an online presence

Develop a robust web presence for *ESSA* and any school-related information, including a timeline for the development of the plan, resources/ tools, and any supporting materials. This online presence can also serve as a vehicle for stakeholder input.

Questions to consider include:

- ✓ Is online information easy to understand, comprehensive and updated?
- ✓ How can we market the online platform to maximize utilization from stakeholders?
- ✓ Will staff need to be trained to manage the online platform?

Engagement: Developing a Local Plan

Keys to setting the tone for further engagement include getting the right voices in the room, being transparent about the work ahead in developing the annual plan, and remaining open to public input.

Mid-Year:

- Conduct the **needs assessment** with stakeholders and identify **root causes**.
- Continue to **progress monitor** programs and services.
- Examine the budget for the upcoming school year.
- Re-assess the path forward once *ESSA* allocations are made to begin developing a new plan alongside stakeholders.

Build a collective vision for student success

This is an opportunity for district and school leaders to engage with their stakeholders to create a unified description or idea of student success that is aligned to the needs of the school community.

Questions to consider include:

- ✓ What is our vision for improved outcomes for our students?
- ✓ How can we make sure each student is included in our vision for success?
- ✓ Even when some stakeholders disagree about what success for all students will look like, where is there consensus?

○ Inform stakeholders

District and school leaders will come to the *ESSA* table with different experiences and perspectives. Some stakeholders have experience with complex and collaborative planning processes. Other stakeholders might come to the *ESSA* table with little or no experience with the new requirements or K-12 accountability systems. All families, staff and community members should understand their role in the engagement process, how *ESSA* will impact them, and what programs and services are available.

Questions to consider include:

- ✓ How will the implementation of *ESSA* impact each stakeholder?
- ✓ What is the best way to continuously provide information to stakeholders?
- ✓ Are there questions related to *ESSA* implementation that certain stakeholder groups are uniquely positioned to answer?

○ **Conduct Outreach**

Outreach must include a communications strategy specifically targeted toward all stakeholders, including those historically underrepresented. Consider using multiple methods of outreach to build a broad community and foster collaborative decision-making.

Questions to consider include:

- ✓ How can we ensure outreach is consistent?
- ✓ Which outreach vehicle(s) have proven to be most effective in the past?
- ✓ How can we encourage and support input from stakeholders, even those who are frustrated, angry or mistrustful?

Effective Strategies for Conducting Initial Outreach

- Offer outreach at different times of the day to accommodate various work schedules.
- Coordinate meeting logistics and provide an accessible location.
- Direct stakeholders to appropriate personnel on the internal leadership team when individual concerns arise.

○ **Listen to input before decisions are made, and use or acknowledge it**

Meaningful engagement means listening and responding to the thoughtful input of staff, families and community members. School and district leaders should be clear about how feedback is incorporated, and reasons why feedback may not be immediately incorporated. When there is a culture of responsiveness, stakeholders are more likely to feel involved as purposeful and informed partners in decision-making.

Questions to consider include:

- ✓ Given the *ESSA* timeline and other issues that require attention in our community, when should we engage stakeholders to provide input on policy changes?
- ✓ How can we elicit targeted feedback geared toward specific decisions?
- ✓ How will we provide feedback to stakeholders on how their input was integrated in decision-making?

○ **Communicate early and often**

Throughout the year, it is important to collect feedback, put the feedback to action, and evaluate the effectiveness of those actions with stakeholders.

Questions to consider include:

- ✓ How do we create a culture in which stakeholders feel supported and comfortable enough to speak freely?
- ✓ When should we engage stakeholders as a preemptive measure?
- ✓ What are the best tools or feedback loops to utilize?

Ongoing Engagement: Sustaining School Improvement

Local planning is an iterative process designed to foster continuous improvement and to respond to new student needs, emerging technology and available resources. To continuously improve both engagement efforts and *ESSA* implementation, local leaders must dedicate themselves to ongoing engagement. Through continued engagement, new connections turn into ongoing relationships with families, staff, and community members.

End-of-Year Reflection:

- Continue to progress monitor outcomes from the school year, and make adjustments.
- Adjust and finalize a plan for the upcoming year alongside stakeholders.
- Submit new annual *ESEA LEA* plan in EWEG or school level annual plan.

○ Commit to ongoing engagement

Nearing submission of the new *ESSA* LEA plan and school level annual plans, which have been developed in consultation with stakeholders, there should be clear, public affirmation from local leaders to continued engagement. This builds public trust and internal accountability.

Questions to consider include:

- ✓ Which staff member(s) can be tasked with building and maintaining these relationships?
- ✓ How else can we keep stakeholders engaged and informed even when the school year is over?
- ✓ What other opportunities exist or are on the horizon that could be informed by stakeholder input?

○ Evaluate your strategy and improve over time

With a spirit of continuous improvement, ask for input from your stakeholders on what engagement efforts can be done differently or better, and what works.

Questions to consider include:

- ✓ How do we know that our engagement efforts are meaningful?
- ✓ Have we asked our stakeholders how we can improve our efforts?
- ✓ Which partners can support improvement?

Effective Ongoing Engagement

A critical best practice is to follow up on the input stakeholders provide throughout the Annual School Planning Process, which includes data analysis, needs assessment, root cause analysis, developing the *ESSA* LEA plan and school plans, and progress monitoring. Stakeholders should be aware of feedback loops (see Figure 4), meaning how/when input is incorporated and the outcome. Mechanisms should exist for parents to provide regular, ongoing feedback. Education decision-makers need to show they are continuously listening when stakeholders share their thoughts.

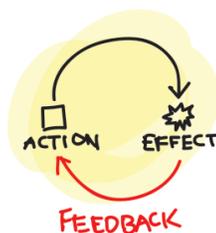


Figure 4: Effective Feedback Loop

Effective Engagement Strategies:

- Jot down ideas and input from parents during chance encounters – e.g., at the soccer game, in the parking lot, or at a school event. Keep a notebook handy or send yourself a text message. Encourage this practice with school staff.
- Maintain a central place to track/store all feedback.
- Invite experts to present workshops and lectures on topics of interest to parents in the district/school.
- Conduct online, telephone or in-person surveys (e.g., the [New Jersey School Climate Survey](#)), vetted by stakeholders, to whole stakeholder groups or a representative sample (e.g., school-based personnel).
- Conduct focus groups, possibly facilitated or monitored by a third party, to elicit continued feedback on a particular issue.
- Regularly update public timelines to keep stakeholders abreast of planning and implementation processes.
- Communicate the outcome of strategies with stakeholders, using data and other resources. For example, demonstrate the outcome (test results) following the implementation of strategies (tutoring and after-school services).
- Regularly inform leadership of feedback. An effective feedback loop ensures leadership is always aware of stakeholder/community responses and needs.
- Ensure new leaders maintain a commitment to engagement efforts, regardless of transitioning personnel.



Section 3:

Effective Engagement Strategies and Tools

Districts and schools have a responsibility to ensure all stakeholders are able to engage in a well-defined process that enables them to inform efforts that ensure educational equity. This means extending beyond minimal requirements and the usual people, processes and practices (e.g., public comment at school board meetings, reliance on already-formed advisory groups). Instead, *ESSA* creates an opportunity for LEAs to consider how the norms and habits of stakeholder engagement can be strengthened to allow new perspectives and voices to be reflected in decision-making circles, which is especially important in conversations about accountability for equity for all students.

These examples highlight effective strategies used by New Jersey districts and schools, while taking into consideration the unique needs and many configurations of school districts in the state.

Contents include:

- Effective Engagement with Identified Stakeholders
 - Engaging with Students and Youth
 - Engaging Parents, Guardians, and Families
 - Engaging Families of Students with Disabilities
 - Engaging Families of English Language Learners
 - Engaging with Immigrant Families
 - Engaging with Educators
 - Engaging with Rural Communities
 - Engaging with Policymakers

This section has been adapted from [*Meaningful Local Engagement Under ESSA: A Handbook or LEA and School Leaders*](#), a collaborative publication from the Council of Chief State School Officers and [*Partners for Each and Every Child*](#).

Effective Engagement Strategies with Identified Stakeholders

The following pages offer specific tips and resources for engaging with various groups.

Engaging with Students and Youth

- Engage with students directly through in-school opportunities like homeroom periods, civics course units or extracurricular activities.
- Use family and educator ambassadors to engage with young people, work with youth-led organizations, youth groups, alumni groups, and community college or university students, and use social media where appropriate.
- Proactively address past habits and cultures that may have excluded students and/or led to mistrust or miscommunication.

NJ Highlight:

At Black Horse Pike Regional High School District, talking to students is as much of a priority as talking about students. Across the three schools, staff engage with students informally at lunch to gather feedback on topics such as assessments and facilities. In a more formal setting, students from various racial/ethnic and academic backgrounds are periodically convened to participate in focus groups. Feedback is then passed on to staff and administration at each school. This strategy has led to a much valued and improved school climate.

Engaging with Parents, Guardians and Families

- Learn the needs of parents so engagement events and materials can be tailored to what is most relevant to them. Parents have their own needs that should be considered. This should be an initial step in the beginning of the school year for all parents.
- Many families do not feel welcomed or know that *ESSA* requires states and districts to involve them in the development of the district and school *ESSA* plans. Education leaders can also rely on a trusted liaison, or other local, community-based education advocate to share information with families about the *ESSA* implementation process.
- Engage families through home visits, family workshops, and training and empowerment activities that are relevant to their needs. Where possible, districts and schools should use existing family engagement opportunities such as parent-teacher conferences, advisory nights, or student events where families are invited.

- Make messages to parents easy to digest. *ESSA*-related materials should be provided in understandable and relatable terms. At the most basic level, parents want to know how *ESSA* affects their child and their school, and what they can do. Consider a messenger; use community leadership and family ambassadors to engage with families to build trust and foster ongoing relationships.
- Translate materials to reach all families. It is essential that *ESSA*-related materials are translated into the most commonly spoken materials should also be made accessible to reach parents with disabilities. Doing so demonstrates a commitment to ensuring all parents and families have access to the information they need to support their child’s learning and development.
- Inform parents about community resources, afterschool programs and other opportunities that may support their child’s learning and social-emotional development.

NJ Highlight:

To increase parent engagement, school leaders have found that meeting with parents 30 minutes before or after popular events, such as athletic games or musical concerts, has been an effective way to inform parents about *ESSA* and other related topics.

Engaging with Families of English Language Learners

- Meet in a community center or train a family ambassador to meet directly with families. Undocumented families may not feel that a school site is necessarily a safe place for a meeting.
- Use a video recording of in-person engagement methods Students and families of different faiths may not be able to attend weekend events or may be absent for portions of the school year to observe holidays, so schedule events with this in mind.
- Ensure translation is community-vetted and accurate, and hire and train community or family leaders to support engagement. Policy structures all over the country and world are different, as are cultural norms about the role of education leaders.

“Talk to parents about what they need from their child’s school in order to be better partners. Sometimes this may be a nutritional class or resume coaching. Every workshop or engagement event should be relevant and responsive to parents. The more they know, the more they can implement.” – Celeste Merriweather, Director of Grants and Funded Programs, Bridgeton Public Schools

Below is a list that may be helpful to provide to parents:

- Information about selecting books and reading with children at home
- Information about how math is taught in U.S. schools
- Information about how to interpret and respond to the report card
- Information about community resources, such as medical and dental clinics and sources of emergency food and clothing. This should also include information about accessing the resources, including filling out forms for reduced fees or free services
- Information about the role of special school staff members, such as the counselor and the nurse
- Information about what decision-making committees exist at the school and what is involved for those who participate
- Information about adult ESL classes, if applicable, and family literacy programs
- Information about what they should do if they think their child may have a disability
- Information about intervention and referral services in the school

For more resources to support engaging with families of ELLs, see [Appendix B](#).

Engaging with Immigrant Families

- Invite families and school staff to participate in focus groups or information sessions to explore families' and the school's expectations and goals for students, and to begin an initial informal discussion of student needs and school supports.
- Ask family members of older elementary or secondary school students to share their insights into how to prepare children for school, including ways that families can support classroom instruction.
- Make direct contact with families by phone or at community activities to share grade-level expectations and school contact information. Be aware of varied English literacy levels among families.

These strategies can also be used to support migrant students, as well as students who are military-involved, formerly incarcerated, foster and homeless youth, young parents, youth reengaging in more traditional or alternative education programs, and families of students entering kindergarten.

Engaging with Families of Students with Disabilities

- Work with the district’s director of special education, the school principal and local advocates to reach the families of students with disabilities.
- Hold small group meetings with district and school representatives and families/parents/guardians of students with similar disabilities. This will allow the district or school staff to step back and have a two-way conversation with parents, instead of serving as the main presenters.
- Engage members of the child study team in school leadership teams as they are aware of the needs of the students with disabilities in the school and they may have community connections to engage stakeholders in collaboratively supporting students and their families.
- Send communication about activities and school events to students who live in the school community but who attend schools in another district.

Special Education Parent Advisory Groups in New Jersey (SEPAG) give parents the opportunity to provide input to their school district about policies, programs, practices and services that impact students with disabilities and their families. For more information, [view the SEPAG Manual](#).

Engaging with Educators

- Build *ESSA* discussions into the agendas of staff meetings or trainings, and ensure that meetings are held during times of the year and day that are available to all staff.
- Engage teachers of all students in school leadership teams – ESL teachers, special education teachers, reading specialists, intervention teachers.
- Enlist educators, including school leaders, to lead engagement events or initiatives. Given this, their peers are often more likely to participate.
- Provide resources to educators so they can attend professional development or planning meetings necessary to support *ESSA* activities, such as professional learning communities, implementation of evidence based interventions, data analysis, and family engagement events that extend beyond the contractual school day. Contact the appropriate NJDOE office for questions about allowable funding.
- Reach educators on social media, online forums, school newsletters or bulletins and listservs, in addition to in person engagement.

- Create safe spaces for educator feedback, including ways to receive anonymous feedback.
- Engage principals to serve as informative peer leaders.

Top Resources

- [ESSA Toolkit for Principals](#) (National Association of Secondary School Principals)
- [Teacher Engagement and Perspectives On ESSA: An Eagerness To Engage and Be Heard](#) (Educators for High Standards)

NJ Highlight:

Bridgeton teachers needed to engage the parents of the 70-percent ELL student population. Administrators partnered with Revive South Jersey to provide classes to teachers in conversational Spanish. During the second year of implementation, teacher participation in the classes more than doubled.

Engaging with Rural Communities

- Offer different ways to engage that will minimize required travel time for face-to-face discussions.
- These can include online discussions, use of social media, surveys, webinars and video conference calls, and regional or virtual focus groups.
- Plan in-person events far in advance, scheduling at locations that people can easily access using public transportation. Provide resources, such as transportation, to help families and community members participate.
- Hold engagement events in formal and informal centers of the community, such as libraries or faith-based centers.
- Reach out to representatives from local organizations who have experience in supporting and services the surrounding communities.

Top Resources

- [Community Engagement in Rural Areas](#) (Chief Education Office)
- [Making ESSA Work for Rural Students, Schools and Communities](#) (Battelle for Kids)

Engaging with Policymakers

- Policymakers include local legislators, elected members of the local school board or city council, and other appointed or elected decision-makers. Invite policymakers and/or their staff to attend meetings (see [Appendix E](#)) where school officials discuss implementation.
- Develop and share briefing material to inform their thinking.
- Invite policymakers to a meeting or event at district offices.
- Include policymakers in trainings or briefings that are offered to district staff.
- Meet informally with individual policymakers and/or their staff to answer their questions.

Top Resources

- [ESSA Digital Kit for Governors](#)
(National Governors Association (NGA))
- [America's Legislators Back to School](#)
(National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL))
- [Community Engagement and Education Advocacy by School Boards](#)
(Hanover Research)

Districts across New Jersey often invite representatives from the offices of mayor or the municipal governing body to attend meetings. These representatives relay information back to policymakers.

Engaging with Community Partners

- Connect students to community partners. Business community representatives can support job training programs; internships for students; and professional learning resources for teachers, paraprofessionals and other school and youth-serving staff. Local businesses and organizations can also be sites for structured learning experiences and community-based instruction.
- Reach out to peer districts/schools, including those with similar needs and challenges and/or charter organizations, to collaborate on strategies.
- Reach out to state agency offices (e.g., Dept. of Human Services), community hospitals and other healthcare organizations, including caregivers/social workers/occupational therapists who can support strategies for school improvement. Such groups can provide onsite clinics; family workshops such as preparing for college or understanding school report cards; integrated support services for students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs); and additional resources such as translation and interpretation, out-of-school time enrichment opportunities, family engagement, early childhood programs, college and career, and comprehensive health and wellness services.

NJ Highlight:

Mainland Regional High School surveyed local businesses to understand required credentials needed for jobs that are in the greatest demand. The district then partnered with Microsoft to provide classes so that HS students could then earn those credentials such as student technician certification pathways. In addition, the school adopted student data programming that can be accessed by guidance counselors, district accountants, and parents.



Appendices: Resources to Supplement Effective Stakeholder Engagement

Contents include:

- NJDOE Title I, School, Family, and Community Involvement Resources
- NJDOE Non Public School Services
- NJ Community Organizations and Nonprofits
- Local and National Engagement Resources
- Additional Stakeholders to Engage
- Glossary of Key Stakeholder Engagement Terms
- Stakeholder Meetings Checklist
- Comprehensive Engagement Checklist
- NJDOE Contacts

Appendix A: NJDOE Title I School, Family and Community Involvement Resources

School-Parent Compact

- [Title I School-Parent Compact](#)

Title I Annual Parent Meeting

- [Title I Annual Parent Meeting Requirements WEBINAR](#)
- [Annual Title I Meeting Sample Agenda](#)
- [Annual Title I Meeting Flyer](#)

Parent Notification

- [Parental Notification Requirements WEBINAR](#)
- [Title I Parental Involvement Notification Requirements for Districts](#)
- [Parents' Right-To-Know Letter](#)

Resources on Parent Involvement

- [USED Dual Capacity Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships](#)
- [Parent Involvement Section 1118](#)

Training and Partnering with Parents

- [14 Activities: Building Capacity for Parental Involvement](#)
- [The Statewide Parent Advocacy Network \(SPAN\)](#)

NJDOE Nonpublic School Services

- [State consolidated consultation form](#)
- [NJDOE Critical Dates for State Funded Nonpublic School Programs](#)
- [Affirmation of Consultation](#)
- [Refusal of Funds](#)
- [Sample Nonpublic School Request for Consultation Letter](#)

Appendix B: Local and National Engagement Resources

This section has been adapted from [Meaningful Local Engagement Under ESSA: A Handbook or LEA and School Leaders](#), a collaborative publication from the Council of Chief State School Officers and [Partners for Each and Every Child](#).

Engagement Vehicles and Mechanisms

- [Let's Get this Conversation Started](#) and [Let's Keep this Conversation Going](#)
Council of Chief State School Officers(CCSSO)
- [The Partnership Way Resources](#)
(The IDEA Partnership)
- [Leading by Convening: A Blueprint for Authentic Engagement](#)
(A collaboration with the US Office of Special Education Programs, National Association of State Directors of Special Education, Inc.)
- [Using Technology to Support Family Engagement](#)
(Kaplan)
- [5 Steps to Better School/Community Collaboration](#)
(Edutopia)
- [Additional Resources for Community Partnerships](#)
(Edutopia)
- [Community & Family Engagement: Principals Share What Works](#)
(Coalition for Community Schools, NASSP, NAESP)
- [Principles on Stakeholder Engagement](#)
(Learning First Alliance)
- [Every Student Succeeds Act Guide for Advocates](#)
(The Leadership Conference Education Fund/The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights)

Engagement with Specific Groups:

Students and Youth

- [Opportunity Youth Network](#)
- Video: [ESSA and What Students Need to Know](#)
(National Association of Student Councils, a program of the NASSP)
- [Raising Student Voice and Participation](#)
(National Association of Student Councils, a program of the NASSP)
- [Student Engagement: Resource Roundup](#)
(Edutopia)

ELL Populations

- [**A Parent Involvement Guide for Educators in ELL Programs**](#)
(NJDOE)
- [**Executive Order Fact Sheets for Families**](#)
(Advocates for Children of New Jersey)
- [**Family Engagement: Authentic Partnerships for Increasing Achievement**](#)
(NJDOE)
- [**A Guide for Engaging ELL Families: Twenty Strategies for School Leaders**](#)
(Colorin Colorado)
- [**Immigrant Family and Community Engagement in the Schools**](#)
(United States Conference of Catholic Bishops)
- [**A Parent's Handbook to New Jersey Schools**](#)
(NJDOE)

Parents, Guardians and Families

- [**Brief on Family Engagement in ESSA-2015**](#)
(National Education Association (NEA))
- [**District Family Engagement Policy Toolkit**](#)
(Scholastic Family and Community Engagement)
- [**ESSA Bootcamp: Parent and Community Engagement Deep Dive**](#)
(National Center for Learning Disabilities)
- [**Partners in Education: A Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family–School Partnerships**](#)
(US ED)
- [**Family-School-Community Partnerships 2.0: Collaborative Strategies to Advance Student Learning**](#)
(Priority Schools Campaign, NEA)
- [**Policy Statement on Family Engagement: From the Early Years to the Early Grades**](#)
(US ED)
- [**What's the Difference? No Child Left Behind and the Every Student Succeeds Act**](#)
(National PTA)
- [**Family Engagement in ESSA**](#)
(En Español) (National PTA)
- [**Statewide Family Engagement Centers**](#)
(National PTA)
- [**ESSA: What Does This New Law Mean for my Child?**](#)
(En Español) (National PTA)
- [**Overview: How to Engage Underrepresented Groups**](#)
(National PTA)
- [**Engaging Underrepresented Communities in Planning**](#)
(Place Matters, Ford Foundation)
- [**The New Education Majority Poll**](#)
(The Leadership Conference Education Fund)

- [Primer on Parent and Community Engagement in the Every Student Succeeds Act](#)
(Alliance for Excellent Education and National Association for the Advancement of Colored People)
- [Parent Power BootCamp ESSA Toolkit](#)
(National Black Child Development Institute)
- [Parent Survey – Special Education](#)
(NJDOE)

Rural Communities

- [Community Engagement in Rural Areas](#)
(Chief Education Office)
- [Making ESSA Work for Rural Students, Schools and Communities](#)
(Battelle for Kids)
- [Educating Students in Rural America: Capitalizing on Strengths, Overcoming Barriers](#)
(National Association of State Boards of Education)
- [Rural Education Resource Center](#)
(US ED)

Educators

- [ESSA Toolkit for Principals](#)
(NASPP)
- [When Teachers and Administrators Collaborate](#)
(Edutopia)
- [Engaging Educators: A Reform Support Network Guide for States and Districts](#)
(The Reform Network)
- [ESSA for Educators: Resource List](#)
(Educators for High Standards)
- [Teacher Engagement and Perspectives On ESSA: An Eagerness To Engage and Be Heard](#)
(Educators for High Standards)

Policymakers

- [ESSA Digital Kit for Governors](#)
(NGA)
- [America’s Legislators Back to School](#)
(NCSL)
- [Community Engagement and Education Advocacy by School Boards](#)
(Hanover Research)

Leveraging Community Partnerships

- [A How-To Guide for School-Business Partnerships](#)
(The Council for Corporate and School Partnerships)
- [Community & Family Engagement: Principals Share What Works](#)
(NASPP, Coalition for Community Schools (CCS), National Association of Elementary School Principals, and the MetLife Foundation)

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- [Strengthening Partnerships: Community School Assessment Checklist](#)
(CCS, The Finance Project)
 - [School-Community Learning Partnerships: Essential to Expanded Learning Success](#)
(The Expanded Learning and Afterschool Project)
 - [“Four Simple Questions” for Engagement](#)
(National Center for Systemic Improvement)
 - [Sharing Stories of Collaborative Leadership](#)—District Examples
(Technology in Education)
 - [Nine Elements of Effective School Community Partnerships to Address Student Mental Health, Physical Health, and Overall Wellness](#)
(CCS and the National Association of School Psychologists)

Appendix C: Additional Stakeholders to Engage

Students and Youth

- Alumni associations
- Student mentors
- Juvenile justice programs, youth court
- Youth groups or leadership programs, including faith-based youth groups (e.g., Boys and Girls Clubs)
- Youth-led initiatives or organizations
- Student subgroups and students with specific needs and assets (English learners, LGBTQ students, students with an IEP, opportunity youth, students of color)

Parents, Families, and Communities

- Family and community organizers
- Local parent/family advocacy groups
- Faith-based organizations
- Parents, guardians, and families, including those of students with disabilities, English learners, and other underrepresented students
- Families and advocates for students in the foster system or youth experiencing homelessness

District-Level Educators

- Local union chapters
- Labor/management alliances
- District leadership
- LEA staff
- Charter management operators
- Alternative and transitional education providers

School-Level Educators

- Principals
- Special education teachers
- English language/bilingual education teachers
- School personnel, including social/emotional support staff
- Classroom management groups, leaders, experts
- School employed physical and mental health providers (e.g., school psychologists, school counselors, school social workers)
- Alternative education program leaders
- School resource officers

Note, this list includes a number of stakeholders, but it is not an all-encompassing list. Stakeholder communities vary greatly by community, and will often include stakeholders that are not listed in this appendix.

Appendix D: Glossary of Key Stakeholder Engagement Terms⁵

- **Access:** The ways in which educational institutions and policies strive to ensure that students have equal opportunities to take full advantage of their education. Factors such as race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, perceived intellectual ability, past academic performance, special-education status, English-language ability, and family income or educational-attainment levels – in addition to factors such as relative community affluence, geographical location, or school facilities – often contribute to barriers to access educational opportunities.
- **Accommodations:** Changes made to classroom instruction or assessment as required by law for students with disabilities or English learners. These changes allow a student to participate in class and demonstrate their knowledge on assessments just as their native English speaking peers or those who do not have a disability. Examples include extended time to take a test, larger print on a classroom assignment, or a seat closer to the teacher. Students and other stakeholders may require accommodations inside and outside the school building.
- **Additional targeted support and improvement schools:** These are schools that have been identified for additional targeted support and improvement under new state accountability systems because one or more subgroups of students in the school are performing at the same level as the lowest performing 5% of schools in the state. These schools must develop an improvement plan in consultation with stakeholders that is approved by the district.
- **Chronic absenteeism:** The percentage of a school’s students who are not present for 10 percent or more of the days that that they were “in membership” at a school.
- **Comprehensive support and improvement school:** Each Title I school with an overall performance, based on all applicable indicators and in accordance with the weighting system described in Section 4.1.D(ii) of the [ESSA State Plan](#), that is at or below the fifth percentile of Title I schools (i.e., the cut score); each high school with a four-year graduation rate at or below 67 percent; and each Title I school identified as in need of targeted support and improvement for three or more consecutive years (chronically low performing).
- **Targeted support and improvement school:** Each school with a student subgroup whose overall performance, based on all applicable indicators and in accordance with the weighting system described in section 4.1.D(ii), is at or below the fifth percentile of Title I schools (i.e., the cut score).
- **Consolidated state plan:** New Jersey’s plan for complying with the requirements of ESSA. A state has the option of submitting plans separately for each title (e.g. Title I

⁵ [Partners for Each and Every Child. \(2017, July\). Meaningful Local Engagement Under ESSA.](#)

plan, Title III plan) or for submitting a plan which describes what the state intends to do to comply with the requirements of the entire law. These plans must be developed in consultation with stakeholders, be available for public comment, and be submitted to and approved by the U.S. Department of Education. *ESSA* includes various requirements for the information included in a state's plan such as the plan for publicly reporting graduation rates for students in foster care, the statewide accountability system which must be in place, and the state's strategy for reducing the use of seclusion and restraint. This plan must be revisited and revised periodically.

- **Curriculum:** The lessons and academic content taught in a school or in a specific course or program. An individual teacher's curriculum, for example, would be the specific lessons, assignments, and materials used to organize and teach a particular course.
- **Direct Student Services:** A provision in *ESSA* that allows states to set aside 3 percent of Title I funding and award these funds to districts with a high number of schools identified for improvement. To receive funding from the states, schools must demonstrate commitment to offering more meaningful learning opportunities, activities, courses and services not otherwise available to students. More generally, direct student services include programming or services that directly impact student health, learning, or engagement, such as access to a computer, additional course or staff, or after-school programs.
- **Educational Equity:** The condition under which every student has access to the resources and educational rigor they need at the right moment in their education, despite race, gender, ethnicity language, disability, family background, or family income. Meaningful progress toward equity in education does not often mean equal resources for all, since many students from historically disadvantaged students start with less than their peers, and require additional resources to achieve the same level of success as a result. In an equitable system, all individuals attain sufficient knowledge and skill to pursue the college and career path of their choice and become active and contributing members of their communities.
- **English language learner (ELL):** A student between the ages of 3-21 in elementary or secondary school who was not born in the U.S. and/or whose native language is a language other than English, and who has not yet achieved proficiency or fluency in English. EL students might also be migrant, Native American or Alaska Native, multi-lingual or have difficulty speaking, reading, writing or understanding the English language.
- **Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015:** The latest reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)* of 1965, which replaces *NCLB*. *ESSA* provides federal funding to schools, districts, and states to raise achievement for low-income students and other historically disadvantaged students, and to implement various specific programs. Funds allocated to schools, districts, and states must be spent in accordance with the law.

- **High-needs students:** Students in need of special or multiple forms of assistance and support, such as students who are living in poverty, who attend high-minority schools, who are far below grade level, who have left school before receiving a regular high school diploma, who are at risk of not graduating with a diploma on time, who are homeless, who are in foster care, who have been incarcerated, who have disabilities, or who are English learners.
- **Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA):** A law ensuring services to children with disabilities across the country. *IDEA* governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education and related services to more than 6.5 million eligible infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities. Infants and toddlers with disabilities (birth-2) and their families receive early intervention services under *IDEA* Part C. Children and youth (ages 3-21) receive special education and related services under *IDEA* Part B. Funding for *IDEA* is authorized under *ESSA*.
- **Low-performing schools:** Schools that have demonstrated poor performance over time on any of a number of indicators, including student performance on standardized assessments. This also includes schools with persistent or significant achievement gaps.
- **Meaningful stakeholder engagement:** The process used by an organization to engage individuals and/or groups in a way that acknowledges their unique needs and creates value for both the organization and all the stakeholders involved.
- **Needs assessment:** A systematic approach that progresses through a defined series of phases. Needs assessment focuses on the ends (i.e., outcomes) to be attained, rather than the means (i.e., process).
- **Personalized learning:** Also referred to as personalization, differentiated or student-centered learning. A diverse variety of educational programs, learning experiences, instructional approaches and academic-support strategies that are designed to address the distinct learning needs, interests, aspirations or cultural backgrounds of individual student⁵.
- **Rigor:** Instruction, schoolwork, learning experiences, and educational expectations that are academically, intellectually, and personally challenging. Rigorous learning experiences, for example, help students understand knowledge and concepts that are complex, ambiguous, or contentious, and they help students acquire skills that can be applied in a variety of educational, career, and civic contexts throughout their lives.
- **School culture/climate:** Generally, the beliefs, perceptions, relationships, attitudes, and written and unwritten rules that shape and influence every aspect of how a school functions, but the term also encompasses more concrete issues such as the physical and emotional safety of students, the orderliness of classrooms and public spaces, or the degree to which a school embraces and celebrates racial, ethnic, linguistic, or cultural

diversity. School Culture is often impacted by behavioral norms of students and school personnel, including discipline codes or practices.

- **Stakeholder:** Individuals or collective entities who are invested in the welfare and success of a group or policy. In the case of a school and its students, all members of a community should be considered stakeholders. *ESSA* requires that states and districts engage specific stakeholders among state policymakers and agencies, district and school staff and families and communities during plan development. Under the law, LEAs must engage teachers, principals, specialized instructional support personnel, paraprofessionals, administrators, English learner administrators, charter school leaders, parents/families, students, community partners/organizations, tribal organizations, researchers, educator preparation programs and researchers.
- **Student engagement:** The degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught, which extends to the level of motivation they have to learn and progress in their education.
- **Targeted support and improvement schools:** Schools that are identified through the New Jersey state rating system because they have one or more groups of students who are consistently underperforming. These schools must design and implement a targeted support and improvement plan which is approved by the district and is designed to raise achievement for the group(s) of students that is (are) consistently underperforming.

Appendix E: Stakeholder Meeting Checklist

Use this checklist to ensure meetings are inclusive and accessible to a diverse group of stakeholders:

- Target outreach to historically underserved stakeholders
- Financially support travel,
- Make materials available:
 - Before the meeting (including questions to consider)
 - In multiple languages and formats in consideration of varied levels of literacy and proficiency
 - In a format that is easy for all stakeholders to understand
 - Online
- Host events in a central, accessible location with transportation assistance
- Invite interpreters
- Provide food, and include options for those with dietary restrictions
- Hold multiple meetings, held at times when families and teachers can attend
- Provide childcare
- Provide access to homework help at the meeting
- Send out multiple reminders via email, text and on paper
- Record and/or livestream the event
- Ensure that multiple experts on the issues are present, with time for Q&A
- Provide a platform to continue discussion following the meeting (e.g., a website and email for questions)
- Provide a physical place for stakeholders to go to provide ongoing input (e.g., classrooms or school office)

Learn more:

- [Facilitator's Guide to Making Meetings Accessible](#) (Seeds for Change)
- [A Guide to Planning Accessible Meetings](#) (ADA National Network)
- [Ten Tips for Inclusive Meetings \(University of Michigan\)](#) (University of Michigan)
- [Be Responsive and Engage with Your Community](#) (Code for America)
- [Inclusive Meetings](#) (Online Leadership Tools)

Appendix F: Comprehensive Engagement Checklist

Planning

High Capacity for Collaboration and Engagement

- Identify a leadership team to project manage stakeholder engagement efforts.
- Dedicate resources, including funding stream(s), staff and capacity for developing and distributing materials.
- Foster collaborative relationships with other local leaders, including those in peer districts, community-based organizations and philanthropy.
- Engage with national, state and community organizations to better understand the needs of historically underrepresented and/or underserved constituencies.
- Develop a robust web presence for housing information, including a timeline, resources and tools, and any supporting materials.

LEA Planning Process

- Develop a process that includes strategies to ensure that the LEA's plan includes the collection and use of data, alignment with the unique needs/context of the LEA, and compliance with the *ESSA* statute.
- Develop a timeline for local plan development, approval and implementation, including time for meaningful engagement of local stakeholders at each step.
- Make processes and procedures for plan development publicly available and accessible to all stakeholders — including when and how stakeholders will have the opportunity to engage.

Engagement

Diverse Group of Engaged Stakeholders

- Engage with a broad range of stakeholders (See [Appendix D](#)), ensuring participation of historically underrepresented and/or underserved groups.
- Collaborate with strong partners to support broad engagement.

Accessible/Inclusive Methods of Engagement

- Employ ongoing strategies that ensure engagement materials are accessible.
- Ensure that all materials are written and distributed in a way that is easily understood and accessible to parents and families, and available in languages other than English, where appropriate.
- Employ multiple formal procedures to gather input from a diverse range of stakeholders (see section, below) in ways likely to result in timely and meaningful feedback.
- Regularly clarify how stakeholder feedback is incorporated, on which issues, and why.

Engagement Around the Issues: Informed Stakeholders

- Inform local leadership to serve as ambassadors for state-level decision-making.
- Engage with a diverse group of stakeholders around the design and development of *all* local plan components.
- Provide accessible materials for different stakeholder groups aligned to their interests and need (e.g., language, geographic relevance).
- Prepare materials in consultation with advocacy or community organizations.
- Conduct issue-specific consultation on a recurring basis in partnership with NGOs/CBOs with specific expertise or representing specific constituencies.

Moving Forward

Continuous Improvement and Implementation

- Draw from best practices for promoting continuous improvement with engagement efforts. Use feedback loops, analyze effectiveness and reflect on outcomes, and identify challenges and potential solutions.
- Develop data and information systems to track attendance at public events and for organizing stakeholder feedback, including how stakeholder input has shaped actions/decisions, the rationale behind decisions, and how decisions have been modified over time.
- Regularly update a public timeline for continuous improvement that is ambitious and actionable.
- Engage relevant stakeholders at regular intervals to improve implementation.
- Commit to meet regularly to discuss implementation and to evaluate efficacy and progress.

Appendix G: NJDOE Contacts

Education stakeholders who have questions or concerns about the funding sources and topics listed in the following chart should visit the appropriate linked website. If the online information does not resolve the issue, contact the appropriate NJDOE office for assistance. In addition, the [NJDOE County Offices of Education](#) may be able to answer questions related to budgets, funding and reporting requirements.

Table 1.B 1 NJDOE Office Contact Information

Funding Source/Topic	Division/Office	Email Address
NJ ESSA (General)	External Affairs website	Email NJ ESSA
Title I, Part A	Supplemental Educational Programs	Email Title I
Title II, Part A	Teaching and Learning	Email Title II
Title III, Part A	Supplemental Educational Programs	Email Title III
Title IV, Part A	Teaching and Learning	Email Title IV
Nonpublic Schools	Nonpublic Ombudsman	Email Nonpublic Ombudsmen
Grant Applications (EWEG)	Grants Management	Email Grants
Education of Homeless Children	Supplemental Educational Programs	Email Homeless Education
Educational Stability of Students In Foster Care	Supplemental Educational Programs	Email NJ Educational Stability of Students in Foster Care
21 st Century Community Learning Centers	Student Support Services	Email 21st Century
School Improvement	Office of Comprehensive Support	Email Office of Comprehensive Support