

The NJQSAC District Improvement Plan

According to *N.J.A.C. 6A:30-5.2*, each school district that satisfies less than 80 percent of the weighted quality performance indicators in one or more of the five components of school district effectiveness must (a) develop and submit a district improvement plan to the Department of Education (DOE); (b) may be subject to an in-depth evaluation conducted by the DOE; and (c) may be required to accept technical assistance from DOE staff or highly skilled professionals.

As per *N.J.A.C. 6A:30-5.4*, the district improvement plan shall:

- Be data driven, results oriented, and shall outline strategies for building capacity of the public school district and its schools to improve learning and teaching;
- Shall identify specific areas of strength and weakness in addressing all methods employed by the public school district to improve student achievement, and increase school district capacity and improve performance in each applicable component of school district effectiveness;
- Shall incorporate the content and requirements of improvement or corrective action plans required by other State or federal programs;
- Shall be informed by data generated by the DOE, school district and any individual school improvement planning processes that may have occurred;
- Consist of district-wide goals and measurable objectives that describe the structural, policy, programmatic or organizational changes to be implemented;
- Shall identify the individual(s) responsible for addressing each area and shall specify timelines for completion of each goal;
- Shall include, but not be limited to the following elements:
 - School-level planning objectives toward ensuring a thorough and efficient education;
 - Evidence-based strategies for improvement to address all critical areas of need for the public school district identified by the findings of the in-depth evaluation report, if applicable and the comprehensive review; and
 - Identification of the assistance required to implement improvement strategies with budgetary considerations identified.
- Be aligned with and incorporate or reference the relevant provisions of all applicable State and federal plans; and
- The district improvement plan must be developed by an in-district team created by the chief school administrator that consists of public school district administrators, public school district or school personnel with experience in one or more of the areas of school district effectiveness, administrative personnel from a representative sample of the schools in the district, instructional staff, member representatives of the local bargaining unit of the educational staff, and one or more board members. When requested by the CSA, the DOE may provide the team with technical assistance needed to develop the district improvement plan.



The Board of Education:

As per *N.J.A.C. 6A:30-5.5*, within 45-days of receipt of the in-depth evaluation report, the board is required to approve a district improvement plan proposed by the chief school administrator and submit it to the DOE. If the district is notified that no in-depth evaluation will be conducted, the board must submit the district improvement plan within 45-days of that notification.

If the board does not approve the proposed district improvement plan, it may require the CSA and in-district team to re-evaluate and/or revise the plan. The Commissioner has the authority to grant a reasonable extension of time for the board to approve the district improvement plan.

The board's failure to approve a district improvement plan may result in the withholding of state aid or in the initiation of intervention activities identified in *N.J.A.C. 6A:30-6.2*.

The Department of Education:

As per *N.J.A.C. 6A:30-5.5*, the DOE must review the district improvement plan to ensure that addresses the deficiencies identified in the comprehensive review and/or in-depth evaluation. The DOE must also ensure that the plan contains measurable and attainable evidence-based objectives and strategies for achieving improvement, developing local capacity, and improving school district effectiveness in each of the identified areas of deficiency. DOE staff may also recommend revisions to the district improvement plan to the Commissioner.

The Commissioner must review the district improvement plan within 30 days and, if approved, must ensure that sufficient resources are allocated within the district budget to implement the plan. If the Commissioner determines that the plan needs revision, the Commissioner must notify the school district and set a date for the district to submit a revised plan.

As per *N.J.A.C. 6A:30-5.6*, every six months, the DOE must review the school district's progress in implementing the district improvement plan. As part of the review, the district must submit progress reports detailing the progress the district has made in implementing each of the items in the district improvement plan and in satisfying the performance indicators. If the Commissioner determines that the district satisfies 80 to 100 percent in each of the five performance indicators, the Commissioner shall designate the district as high performing, the six month reviews shall stop, and payment for any technical assistance provided by highly skilled professionals shall become the sole responsibility of the district. If the district fails to achieve 80 percent in each of the five indicators, the Commissioner shall issue a letter detailing the areas in which the district continues to need improvement and shall ensure that the district continues to receive appropriate technical assistance. It should be noted that the district improvement plan may be amended by the district, with Commissioner approval. Two years after the implementation of the district improvement plan, DOE must assess whether the plan should be amended to address insufficient progress by the district. Should the plan need to be amended, the DOE shall work collaboratively with the NJQSAC district improvement plan team to develop amendments to the plan.



Assistance provided by the Department of Education:

As per *N.J.A.C. 6A:30-5.7*, the DOE may provide districts with technical assistance to improve performance and increase local capacity in areas of need as identified in the comprehensive review and/or the in-depth evaluation.

- The type of assistance shall be delineated in the NJQSAC district improvement plan developed by the school district in collaboration with the DOE.
- The Commissioner shall select and appoint appropriate DOE personnel to provide the assistance set forth in the NJQSAC district improvement plan, which may be coordinated and provided on a regional or State-wide basis.
- In consultation with the school district, the Commissioner may select and appoint other appropriate highly skilled professionals who are not DOE personnel to provide the assistance set forth in the NJQSAC district improvement plan, which may be coordinated and provided on a regional or State-wide basis.
- The Commissioner shall determine the eligibility of persons, to be designated as “highly skilled professionals,” to perform specific functions in school districts. Highly skilled professionals may be DOE employees and shall be selected considering the needs of the school district with consideration given to the following criteria: relevant educational training; relevant educational experience; expertise in the field in which the technical assistance is needed; and experience working with school districts.
- Highly skilled professionals may be assigned to school districts to perform certain functions, including but not limited to: participating as a member of the in-depth evaluation team; providing technical assistance as delineated in the NJQSAC district improvement plan; providing direct oversight in a period of partial or full state intervention.
- The compensation of highly skilled professionals appointed by the Commissioner shall be a shared expense of the district and the Department, with each assuming one-half of the costs, except where technical assistance is provided by DOE employees, in which case the Department shall assume the total cost of the compensation.

