

ESSA Accountability Overview

About this Overview

This overview describes the federal accountability system under ESSA outlined in the [Wisconsin State Plan](#), which was approved by the US Department of Education on January 11, 2018.

This document assumes familiarity with the basics of [ESSA](#) and [accountability systems](#). This overview will detail differences between ESSA Accountability (federal identification system) and the Accountability Report Cards (state accountability system), as well as provide basic information on ESSA [identifications](#) and supports.

Background

ESSA became law in December 2015. One area of focus of ESSA is to identify the lowest performing public schools and student groups in each state.¹ As states began to review the specifics of ESSA, stakeholder engagement began, notably around the long-term goals set for the state of Wisconsin. DPI conducted extensive stakeholder engagement throughout 2016 and 2017, including outreach to advocacy organizations, district and school administrators, and policy and legislative leaders. The Wisconsin legislature said it was important to keep ESSA and the state accountability system, which features the School Report Cards, separate. DPI supported separate accountability systems because the two systems fundamentally serve two different purposes.²

- **State Accountability:** *rating system that meaningfully differentiates schools and districts across all performance levels.*
- **Federal Accountability:** *ranking system that appropriately identifies the lowest performing schools and student groups for comprehensive and targeted support.*

Stakeholder engagement drove many decisions as DPI wrote the Wisconsin State Plan (submitted in September 2017).³ The plan was approved in January 2018 by the US Department of Education. Preliminary identifications were released in December 2018, and final identifications were released publicly in March 2019. The long-term goals of Wisconsin's State Plan are to cut the achievement gaps and graduation gaps in half within six years. As such, implementation is ongoing with annual reporting on the goals and the accountability indicators expected at least for the next six years. Broader reporting, including progress toward the long-term goals, will be incorporated into the WISEdash Public Portal.

¹ Note ESSA only applies to public schools; does not apply to private schools participating in the Parental Choice Programs.

² To compare the state and federal accountability systems, please refer to the [Accountability Crosswalk](#).

³ [Stakeholder Feedback Summary](#) and [Wisconsin Consolidated State Plan](#)



Accountability Reporting

Because the intent of the federal system is to identify and support schools with very low overall performance and those with the lowest performing student groups,⁴ the ESSA Accountability Reports primarily serve as an explanation of the identifications. The reports also indicate where a school or student group's performance falls in relation to the rest of the state. So for schools near an identification threshold, the reports can serve as a warning. This supports our statewide need for continuous improvement processes in every school.

The ESSA Accountability Reports are released annually. As with other accountability reporting, DPI issues preliminary reports first, followed by public reports, housed in the ESSA reporting app: <https://apps2.dpi.wi.gov/essa/>. The preliminary reports are part of the Federal Notification Packet in SAFE. The Federal Notification Packets include a district summary report of the preliminary identifications across ESSA and IDEA, school level ESSA reports, and information on the regional supports and technical resources available to schools and districts.

Accountability Indicators

There are five accountability indicators in the ESSA accountability system. While there is significant overlap in the data sources, the calculations used to produce scores in Wisconsin's two accountability systems are different:

| Data | ESSA Accountability Reports (Federal) | Accountability Report Cards (State) |
|--------------------|---|---|
| Achievement | <i>Points-based proficiency</i> Forward, DLM, ACT results Score reduction for any student group with a test participation rate of <95%. Minimum 1 year of data | <i>Points-based proficiency</i> Forward, DLM, Aspire, ACT results No penalty for test participation. Minimum two years of data |
| Growth | <i>Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs)</i> Grades 4-8 Forward results | <i>Value-added growth</i> Grades 4-11 Forward, Aspire, ACT results |
| Graduation | <i>Average 4-year and 7-year graduation rates</i> | <i>Average 4-year and 6-year graduation rates</i> |

⁴ Student groups include the All Students group; racial groups (Asian, Black, Hispanic, American Indian, Pacific Islander, Two or more races, White); and service provision groups (ECD, EL, SWD).

| | | |
|----------------------------|--|---|
| Chronic Absenteeism | <i>Defines chronic absenteeism as attendance rates <90%. Includes students enrolled for a half-academic year, or 90 non-consecutive days.</i> | <i>Defines chronic absenteeism as attendance rates below 84%. Includes students enrolled for 45 non-consecutive days.</i> |
| ELP Progress | <i>Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs) ACCESS results</i> | <i>Progress of English learners in attaining English language proficiency is not included in the report cards.</i> |

In addition, the data sources – Wisconsin Student Assessment System test results and WISEdata enrollment and demographic data – are common to both systems. Further, the group size rule, or the accountability cell size rule, is consistent: a minimum of 20 students is required to run a calculation and score performance. This cell size rule (N=20) is used throughout both systems.

Federal Identifications

The ESSA Accountability system ultimately functions as a federal identification system in which there are three identification categories:

1. **Comprehensive Support & Improvement (CSI)**
 - a. CSI-Low Performance
 - b. CSI-Low Graduation Rate
 - c. CSI - Lowest Performance and Low Grad
 - d. CSI - ATSI Conversion
2. **Targeted Support & Improvement Schools (TSI)**
 - a. Targeted Support
 - b. Additional Targeted Support (ATSI)
3. **Not Identified**

The details of the identification and improvement processes for these schools are included in Wisconsin’s [ESSA plan](#). While the federal system is intended to identify schools for support and improvement, DPI reports results for all public schools in the state (including those Not Identified).



Basics on Comprehensive Support identifications:

| CSI – Low Performance | CSI – Low Graduation Rate |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applies to all Title I receiving schools • Schools are in the bottom 5% of overall performance (of all Title I receiving schools), ranked by summary scores • Identifications occur every three years • Schools may exit after two years and must exit no more than four years after identification; more rigorous interventions apply after four years. • Schools may be simultaneously identified for both types of Comprehensive Support | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applies to any school with a 12th grade • Schools with a combined average graduation rate (4 year and 7 year) below 67% are identified • Identifications occur every 3 years • Schools may exit after two years and must exit no more than four years after identification; more rigorous interventions apply after four years • Schools may be identified for both types of Comprehensive Support |

Basics on Targeted Support identifications:

| TSI – Targeted Support | ATSI – Additional Targeted Support |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low performing student groups • Student groups in the bottom 10% of overall performance (All Students statewide) and bottom 10% of student group performance (compared to racial group performance and separately to service group (ECD, EL, SWD) performance) are identified • Identifications occur every year • Exiting TSI status occurs by not being identified the following year. That is, automatic exit if not re-identified the year following initial identification. • A school may have one student group identified for Targeted Support this year, and a different one next year. • A school may have multiple student groups identified for Targeted Support. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lowest performing student groups • ATSI is a subset of TSI, but the performance of a student group identified for ATSI is even lower: group performance is at the 5% mark (CSI threshold) among Title I schools. In other words, if the student group were a school, it would be identified for Comprehensive Support. • Identifications occur every three years • Exit criteria are similar to CSI. • A school may have multiple student groups identified for ATSI. • An ATSI school may also have a group with a demonstrated need for TSI. In this situation, the school-level identification is considered to be ATSI. |



Support for Schools and Districts

Preliminary [federal notifications](#) are scheduled to be released in December. These preliminary notifications cover both ESSA and IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), the two major federal education laws. Both laws require identification of schools and districts needing extra support in their efforts to meet the needs of every student group.

The preliminary federal identifications (ESSA and IDEA) align with DPI's [coordinated improvement supports](#) for schools and districts. Both of these reflect years of collaborative systems change on the part of a number of teams at DPI, in conjunction with our strategic partners. To learn more about this coordinated approach to federal accountability and continuous improvement, see this short [Coordinated Supports Video](#).

Supports Available to Schools with Preliminary Identifications

Any school or district with an ESSA or IDEA [identification](#), once finalized, will have the opportunity to strengthen their existing continuous improvement efforts at little or no cost. Making progress doesn't always require doing more—sometimes it requires doing things differently, like using data more strategically to understand needs and target improvements toward root causes. DPI can help provide tools, resources, and supports that empower schools and districts to coordinate efforts, build collaborative teams, use data, lead for equity and ultimately – improve student outcomes.

We're happy to be working closely with the statewide Technical Assistance Network for Improvement and other partners across the state to connect [resources and supports for continuous improvement](#) and align them to school and district needs.

- The [Technical Assistance Network for Improvement](#), a collaborative statewide effort that offers CESA-based coordinated supports to all schools and districts in Wisconsin. Supports are available now, and schools with ESSA/IDEA identifications will receive priority, low- or no-cost access.
- The [Leading for Learning Series](#), a newly developed professional development and partnership that will provide a coherent plan of comprehensive and effective learning opportunities and a statewide Leading for Learning: Achieving Educational Equity Summit.

Supports Available to All Schools

The coordinated statewide supports and continuous improvement resources are available to all schools and districts whether they are identified under ESSA, IDEA, or not at all. Our intent is to make the school improvement process not only more manageable, but also more impactful, regardless of federal identifications.



Further Information

All accountability systems are complex. We expect questions and welcome feedback. For questions on federal accountability, federal identifications, continuous school improvement or the statewide system of support, please contact the following teams at DPI:

- For questions about ESSA accountability calculations, contact [OEA](#).
- For questions about ESSA funding, school improvement and supports, contact [Title I](#).
- For questions about IDEA accountability calculations, school improvement and supports for students with disabilities, contact [Special Education](#).