



STATE OF NEW JERSEY

# DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A Memo from the New Jersey Department of Education

Date: November 12, 2025  
To: Local Educational Agency Leads  
From: Jorden Schiff, Ed.D., Assistant Commissioner  
Division of Teaching and Learning Services  
Deadline: December 10, 2025

## **NJDOE Invites Public Comment on ESSA Waiver Extension: Middle School Higher Level Math Assessments**

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) is making available today for public comment a draft of its request to the United States Department of Education (USED) to allow grade 7 students enrolled in an advanced mathematics course to participate in the end-of-course assessment for that course in lieu of the grade 7 mathematics assessment.

### **Middle School Higher Level Math Assessments Waiver**

USED had previously granted NJDOE an extension of the [2021 waiver](#) from specific statutory and regulatory provisions regarding middle school math assessment requirements established under the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) through the 2024-2025 school year. With the waiver extension expiring, NJDOE is requesting another waiver extension to maintain accountability requirement for middle school mathematics.

This waiver extension enables the NJDOE to continue to allow each New Jersey seventh grade student who is enrolled in an advanced-mathematics course (Algebra I, Algebra II, or Geometry) to take an end-of-course assessment commensurate with their course of study instead of a grade-specific mathematics assessment. Eighth grade students will continue to be able to take the end-of-course assessment for the course in which they are enrolled instead of the Grade 8 mathematics assessment, as allowed under ESSA.

As has been the case since the 2021-2022 school year, sixth grade students enrolled in Algebra I are required to take both the Grade 6 mathematics assessment and the Algebra I end-of-course assessment. These students are not permitted to take only the Algebra I end-of-course assessment. The results of the Grade 6 math assessment will be used for school accountability calculations in the current year, while the results of the Algebra I assessment taken in sixth grade will be used to meet high school testing requirements under ESSA and be used for school accountability calculations when the student is in ninth grade. This ensures that students are included in ESSA accountability calculations for each grade three through eight and once in high school.

The NJDOE is committed to empowering New Jersey schools and districts to promote the growth of all students. To advance that commitment, the NJDOE encourages schools and districts to create

mathematics course pathways that allow students to reach their highest potential regardless of grade level. One way schools and districts may do this is to allow middle school students to take advanced-mathematics courses in lieu of grade-level mathematics courses and to take the corresponding assessment associated with the course.

**Public Comment**

The waiver request is available for review on the NJDOE [assessment webpage](#). Comments, concerns, and general feedback must be submitted by email to [ESSA@doe.nj.gov](mailto:ESSA@doe.nj.gov) by December 10, 2025 at 5:00 pm.

**Contact Information**

Please contact [ESSA@doe.nj.gov](mailto:ESSA@doe.nj.gov) if you have any questions or need additional information.

c: Members, State Board of Education  
NJDOE Staff  
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network  
Garden State Coalition of Schools  
NJ LEE Group