

Recommendations for Revisions to Tennessee’s Accountability System

Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-1-602, the State Board of Education is required to establish “appropriate performance goals and measures for schools and local education agencies (LEAs).” Moreover, T.C.A. § 49-1-619 requires the Commissioner of Education to obtain approval from the State Board for “changes to the formula used to calculate school or LEA performance goals and measures.” The Tennessee Department of Education (the Department) is undertaking an amendment to update its ESSA state plan in response to monitoring findings received from the U.S. Department of Education (USED). This document details the accountability findings related to Tennessee’s system of school accountability and the Department’s required revisions to Tennessee’s current plan in order to comply with ESSA regulations. Pursuant to the above referenced statute, this item presents the revisions to the achievement indicator and federally reported graduation rate which impact the performance goals and measures of LEAs and schools which are components of Tennessee’s amended ESSA plan. Upon approval of the State Board of Education and USED, the Department will update its accountability protocol and provide additional supports to LEAs regarding implementation of the changes. The Department is proposing the following revisions to the State Board for approval:

Adjustments to the Achievement Indicator

Title I, part A of ESSA details several requirements for the calculation of core indicators in school accountability, including the achievement indicator and graduation rate. The achievement indicator measures the extent to which students have met grade-level expectations on state assessments.

Federal Guideline: USED requires the achievement indicator to be calculated using a single, standards-aligned test for both English and math and administered to all students within the same cohort year.

Accountability Adjustments: The department proposes revisions in the accountability protocol to align with this federal guideline. They are:

- Specifically, for high school students, the department recommends constraining the End of Course (EOC) tests utilized in the achievement indicator to include only the Algebra I/Integrated Math I test and 10th grade English II tests. Exceptions may apply for accelerated students (i.e. middle school students taking EOC assessments) and for students taking the alternative assessments or those working toward the alternate academic diploma.
- The department recommends that qualifying scores on the ACT will no longer be factored into the achievement indicator for students in 11th grade that have previously completed Algebra II or Integrated Math III. The ACT has not been shown to align to the depth and breadth of Tennessee state learning standards and has not been subject to a third party review as required by ESSA to be an allowable assessment for the achievement indicator.
- Tennessee’s existing ESSA plan only specifies a limited number of assessments that can be offered to students ‘off grade level.’ Currently, the only assessments administered off grade level that can

be factored into the achievement indicator would be Algebra I or Integrated Math I assessments administered to 8th grade students. The department proposes expanding the allowable forms of off grade testing to better reflect the unique needs of Tennessee students:

- The three-course math progression (Algebra I or Integrated Math I) can begin in 7th grade.
- The two-course ELA progression (English I) can begin in 8th grade.
- Other grade-level middle school exams can be administered to students beginning in their first year of middle school

Adjustment to the Federal Reported Graduation Rate

Federal Guideline: The four-year graduation rate counts a student who completes all required coursework in Tennessee's graduation requirements and graduates with a regular diploma or an alternate academic diploma within four years and a summer as a high school graduate in his or her original cohort.

Accountability Adjustments: Students with disabilities, specifically identified for additional support in math, who complete four years of ELA and math without completing Algebra II or Integrated Math III coursework, will continue to receive a regular diploma; however, only students that complete all required math courses will be included in the numerator of the federal graduation rate calculation. This

change only applies to reporting; it does not supersede the State Board of Education's High School policy governing the awarding of regular diplomas to students with disabilities. This adjustment should not change what students experience in the classroom.