

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA): An Update on Early Learning Opportunities ***Monday, August 8, McCormick Place, Chicago***

ESSA Background

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) reauthorized ESEA, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, last reauthorized in 2002 as No Child Left Behind (NCLB). From a state perspective, NCLB had several flaws. It included an unworkable measure of how schools and students were doing based on a single test score (AYP, Adequate Yearly Progress) that eventually required 100% of students to be proficient, and included an inflexible series of interventions in schools. The new law provides much more state authority over accountability, assessments and interventions in low-performing schools.

Accountability Systems

States can design systems with multiple measures of how well students and subgroups of students are doing. The federally required indicators of school and student performance are below, but states can add additional indicators.

- Academic achievement as measured by proficiency on annual assessments
- A measure of academic progress (for schools other than high schools)
- For high schools, graduation rates
- Progress of English language learners
- A measure of school quality and student success

Assessments

ESSA continues NCLB schedule of federally required state-wide assessments, with a 95% participation rate still required, although performance on these assessments is not the sole measure of school performance. States can use federal assessment funding to audit their assessment system to look at the issue of over-testing. States can administer the statewide assessment as a single test or break the assessment into smaller parts given throughout the year. Assessments may be partially delivered in the form of portfolios, projects or extended performance tasks. ESSA provides some other assessment options:

- 8th grade math students taking a higher level math class can take an end of course exam instead of the statewide assessment.
- States can allow LEAs to use a nationally recognized high school assessment (such as the ACT or SAT) instead of the statewide assessment.
- States can apply to be part of the innovative assessment pilot to allow LEAs to use different tests, with the idea that a more innovative assessment could be used statewide. This is an option initially for seven states.

School Improvement

Schools must be identified as needing improvement if they fall into one of the following categories

- Schools that are in the bottom five percent
- Any high school failing to graduate 1/3 or more of its students
- Any school in which a subgroup of students is consistently underperforming

Interventions start at the local level (must be approved by the state and evidence-based) and are monitored by the state.

Specific Provisions in ESSA Regarding Early Learners

Title IX of ESSA contains the Preschool Development Grants, authorized at \$250,000,000. These grants will be administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Education. The grants have three purposes: support strategic partnerships for high-quality early learning; encourage partnerships to deliver programs; and maximize parental choice. The grants will be awarded for an initial period of one year and renewed for up to three.

There are several places where ESSA programs can support early learning. In ESSA, Title I funds for disadvantaged students are explicitly allowed to support early childhood education. Title II of ESSA provides states and LEAs with options to include early childhood educators in state and local professional development plans. For example, early childhood program directors and providers are able to participate in efforts to address the transition to elementary school. Title II also includes the “Literacy Education for All, Results for the Nation” (LEARN) literacy program that specifies that 15% of the funds should be used for children from birth through kindergarten entry, and the U.S. Department of Education can invest in pediatric literacy programs. In Title III, focused on English learners, the competitive National Professional Development projects can include efforts to promote school readiness for English learners and their transition from early childhood programs to elementary school and funding can be used for new language instruction and academic content programs for English learners in early childhood education programs. Programs in Title IV that can support the youngest learners include 21st Century Community Learning Centers, charter schools, Promise Neighborhoods, and Community Schools.

Stakeholder Consultation

ESSA requires that stakeholders be consulted before the SEA (State Education Agency) submits a state’s Title I or consolidated plan to the U.S. Department of Education. Who is a stakeholder?

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| governor | charter school leaders |
| state legislators | parents and families |
| state board members | community based organizations |
| LEAs, including rural LEAs | civil rights organizations |
| representatives of Indian tribes | institutions of higher education |
| teachers, principals, other school leaders and personnel | employers |
| | the public |

ESSA TIMELINE

Consultation with stakeholders should be happening NOW. *State plans are due March 6 or July 5; assurances for any program are due March 6 so that federal allocations for the programs will be made. The timeline means that any needed statutory and budgetary changes will to come to a state legislature early next session. Remember as well that the Secretary has up to 120 days to review the plan. Taken together, this means that 2016-2017 is going to be a busy year to ensure that states are ready for school year 2017-2018 and full implementation of ESSA’s provisions that year.*

For more information:

NCSL’s ESSA page: <http://www.ncsl.org/ESSA>

Lee Posey (lee.posey@ncsl.org)

(202) 624-8169

Ben Schaefer (ben.schaefer@ncsl.org)

(202) 624-8667