



Every Student Succeeds Act at a Glance

The Every Student Succeeds Act: Leaving NCLB Behind

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which replaced No Child Left Behind (NCLB) at the end of 2015, is intended to give states and local school districts more control in how learning takes place and how performance is measured within their state, school districts, and schools. This shift in control creates many opportunities for states and local education agencies to engage in meaningful conversations about the best ways to develop improvement plans and create accountability systems that are informed by local context and unique student needs. Unlike any previous federal legislation, ESSA will provide local school districts with tremendous opportunity to impact state policies through the creation of state plans that have the potential to truly consider the realities of urban education and provide the supports necessary to improve performance.

With the expectation that states will be required to submit implementation plans to the USDOE by September 18, 2017, many states across the country have already or are planning to submit their plans soon. State implementation plans must address a variety of issues related to student assessments, accountability systems, and supports for the lowest performing 5% of schools and school districts in the state- many of which are likely to be in urban communities. The opportunities presented through ESSA give states and local school districts the flexibility to offer suggested solutions to the unique challenges faced by urban school districts and opens the door to creating a more equitable education system that meets the needs of every student.

Under ESSA, every state will be required to determine its criteria for designating the lowest performing 5% of schools. Unlike in the past, school districts have the opportunity to develop improvement plans that address the challenges that are unique to their specific students and community.

Things States Need to Know

Statements from the USDOE Secretary Betsy DeVos, earlier this year indicated the USDOE would provide significant flexibility to states regarding how they plan to implement ESSA. But recent feedback to states from the USDOE is calling the previously stated level of flexibility into question. To date, 16 states and the District of Columbia have submitted their plans.

ESSA will set the stage for education policies impacting the next generation of children throughout the United States, and the ESSA planning and implementation process is underway in every state.

While states were under the assumption they were being afforded greater flexibility under the Trump administration, several states that have already submitted their plans have been asked to make modifications, and USDOE is taking a close look at the plans. Reactions by USDOE may give states that have yet to submit their plans insights into what modifications are needed to avoid topics of concern. In its first two rounds of feedback, the USDOE requested revisions from [New Mexico, Delaware, Nevada, Connecticut, Louisiana, New Jersey, Oregon, and Tennessee](#). For example, USDOE has inconsistently questioned whether states can use Advanced Placement (AP) tests as a tool to measure college and career readiness because those assessments may not be available to all students in all schools throughout the state. Currently, AP assessments have been rejected in Delaware's plan but not in Louisiana or Tennessee. The USDOE's ultimate position on this issue may have a significant impact on states, as at least a dozen include AP within their implementation plans. Additionally, other tools that states are considering to gauge college and career readiness may face the same concern including dual enrollment and vocational programming.

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States that have yet to submit their plans would be wise to err on the side of more information rather than less given the shift in tenor at the federal level. States should pay particular attention to components of ESSA understood to be vague such as setting "ambitious" state and student level achievement goals and assessments used to measure college and career readiness.

How ACS Can Help

At [Advocacy & Communication Solutions, LLC \(ACS\)](#), we've been developing advocacy plans and elevating the messages in the k-12 field for nearly two decades. We understand where the opportunities for communication and advocacy exist within the ESSA planning and implementation process and can help you take advantage of the unique opportunities in your state.

Things to Know

- 16 states have submitted their implementation plans
- USDOE is providing more feedback to states than previously anticipated
- States who have yet to submit should plan to provide more information rather than less, particularly related to achievement goals and college and career readiness measurements.

If you have questions about how your state's ESSA implementation plan will impact your organization or community, ACS can help. Check out our advocacy and communication tools at <http://www.advocacyandcommunication.org/tools-resources> or contact us today at info@advocacyandcommunication.org.