

## EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT

### Background

On December 10, 2015, President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Developed and passed with strong, bipartisan support, ESSA replaces the No Child Left Behind Act and provides significant new flexibility around federal education policy by shifting authority back to states and communities. PDE is committed to collaborating with stakeholders – including educators, policymakers, and community members – throughout the commonwealth to ensure coherent and thoughtful state-level implementation of ESSA.

### Stakeholder Engagement and ESSA State Plan

ESSA requires that states develop and submit a State Plan to the U.S. Department of Education. To ensure that Pennsylvania's State Plan is rooted in the day-to-day needs of educators, students, and communities, PDE designed a stakeholder engagement process that relies on participation from a group of diverse thought leaders and practitioners. We are also partnering with the Council of Chief State School Officers to plan a series of stakeholder sessions and work group meetings designed to explore four key areas of the new federal law:

#### Assessments

State assessments serve as a barometer of whether or not students are on track to meet Pennsylvania Academic Standards. The current assessment system is time and resource intensive, is implemented relatively early in the school year, and delivers results on a timeline that is not optimal for informing instructional decision making. The Assessment Work Group will explore options for reducing testing time, decreasing turnaround time, and administering assessments later in the year, while attending to policies and practices that support fair and valid testing.

#### Accountability

The right accountability system ensures that every school, teacher, and parent can envision and achieve the goals for a given year. ESSA challenges states to consider comprehensive and holistic measures of school and student success within a statewide accountability system, including the development of non-academic measures of school quality. The Accountability Work Group will explore opportunities to develop valid measures of student growth and indicators that control for mitigating, out of school factors such as poverty.

#### Educator Certification

Districts should have the autonomy and flexibility to place teachers in roles that allow for personalization of programs to meet students' diverse needs. ESSA eliminates the "highly qualified teacher" requirements of No Child Left Behind, and offers opportunities to identify strategies for recruitment/retention of talented educators. Members of the Educator Certification Work Group will explore PDE's Certification and Staffing Program Guidance to identify avenues to place effective teachers in classrooms. Particular attention should be devoted to special education teachers and content certification, as well as flexibility for dual enrollment instruction.

#### Educator Evaluation

While requirements for equitable distribution of effective teachers and paraprofessionals remain, ESSA is a significant departure from federal initiatives that tie teacher evaluation to student assessment results. The Educator Evaluation Work Group will explore whether there are opportunities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Pennsylvania's current educator evaluation system while addressing the complexities of teaching and learning and still maintaining educator accountability for student success.

### ESSA Transition and Implementation

The new framework under ESSA largely goes into effect in the 2017-18 school year, with 2016-17 serving as a transition year. Pennsylvania's existing state plan remains effective until August 1, 2016. Under ESSA, states are expected to continue interventions in priority and focus schools through the 2016-17 school year.

### Contact Information

Stay informed through the ESSA corner of the department's website. You can also sign up for email updates via [RA-edESSA@pa.gov](mailto:RA-edESSA@pa.gov).