

ESSA Implementation: Supporting the Birth to Third Grade Continuum through the State and Local Plan

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ESSA Overview

- The biggest shift in ESSA is that it moves more authority regarding the design of state education systems from the federal level back toward states and districts to build on and go beyond state flexibility reflected in ESEA waivers.
- The precise meaning and impact of ESSA will continue to play out through regulations, guidance, and implementation over the coming months and years – presenting both opportunities and risks on the federal, state, and local levels for improving education systems and outcomes for all students in the nation.
- This new structure provides opportunities and challenges for the early childhood community, both inside and outside of state and local education agencies.

ESSA and Early Childhood

- References to early education programs, teachers, and students appear throughout the legislation, with a focus on improving transitions, enhancing quality, and improving coordination between local education agencies, schools and existing early childhood programs and reflect the overall transition in ESSA to a flexible approach to interventions and programming.
- The inclusion of early learning in the new legislation may provide an opportunity to further the conversation about state and local systems that connect early learning and k-12 and continue the work of the Preschool Development Grants.
- Without a plan to leverage that opportunity at state and local level, unlikely to have significant changes.

What Does the Law Say—Title I

- Grants to local education agencies, to be implemented through district plans.
- School improvement allocated 7 percent of Title I (or same amount as previously used by LEA).
- State plans must reflect stakeholder engagement and coordination with other federally funded programs, including IDEA, CCDBG, McKinney-Vento, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act and others.
- States must adopt challenging academic standards.
- Each state must adopt academic assessments in math, English Language Arts, and science, which must include multiple measures of student achievement and be disaggregated by LEA and school by various subgroup designations.

What Does the Law Say—Title I?

- The state must create a new statewide accountability system that includes ambitious long-term goals for all students and subgroups that address academic achievement and the percent of English Language learners making progress to proficiency.
- Some indicators are required (proficiency and another indicator of achievement, graduation rates, progress to language proficiency).
- States may also adopt an indicator of "school quality and student success."
- The accountability system must identify schools with subgroups consistently underperforming and the bottom 5 percent of schools.

What Does the Law Say—Title I?

- As part of new accountability systems, states may choose to adopt a kindergarten entrance assessment, indicators or other measures (including participation in high quality, full day early childhood programs or kindergarten, chronic absenteeism) that can be used before third grade assessments as part of diagnostic reviews of schools.
- Accountability systems can also include measure of school discipline such as rates of suspension and expulsion.
- States must also provide evidence that they have adopted challenging academic content standards and aligned academic achievement standards for all students, including those in kindergarten through third grade.

What Does the Law Say—Title I?

- Identification of schools in need of improvement:
 - Comprehensive support and improvement
 - Targeted schools
 - Additional support
- Report cards at the state and local level must provide information student progress at the subgroup level.

Stakeholder Engagement Opportunities

- State and local plans and continuous improvement:
 - ESSA does require states and districts to submit new plans demonstrating how they will use ESSA funds to meet key requirements and adopt allowable uses of funds for activities such as early learning programs.
 - States and districts must engage stakeholders in the development of these plans, *including "early childhood teachers and leaders,"* providing an opportunity for early childhood policymakers at the state and local level to influence the design and review of systems in their states and communities.
 - State plans are subject to a peer review process at the Federal level, which may provide another opportunity to highlight whether and how early childhood stakeholders are included in the development of each plan.

ESSA and Early Learning: Coordination Requirements

- Under the new legislation, states are now required to describe in their Title I State Plans how they will support both LEAs and individual schools that choose to use funds to support early learning programs.
- The SEA is also charged with providing LEAs and schools with information about effective parent and family engagement strategies.
- **Opportunity:** These requirements may provide an opportunity for states to create a clear vision across state agencies that include early childhood offices with a deep understanding of the components of early childhood programming, are designed to foster coordination and can disseminate and provide technical assistance to support best practices in early learning programs within school settings.

ESSA and Early Learning: Coordination Requirements

- The language in ESSA routinely encourages support for transitions between community-based providers and schools, including between Head Start and local schools, as part of LEA and local school plans to use Title I funds for early childhood programs, and as part of the planning for schoolwide Title I schools using funds for early childhood, and as a possible use of funds in targeted assistance schools.
- **Opportunity:** Transition activities are not defined within the legislation, providing an opportunity for SEAs, LEAs and local early childhood providers to work together to create appropriate and meaningful pathways for children and their parents into schools. This could include sharing assessment data, joint professional development, alignment of curriculum and standards, as well as summer learning programs for preschool children moving into school settings and family engagement activities.

ESSA and Early Learning: Coordination Requirements

- The SEA must demonstrate in the Title I plan how it has coordinated early learning services with agencies implementing CCDBG and Head Start.
- LEAs are required to coordinate with Head Start programs. The new law holds LEAs responsible for developing agreements to role work with Head Start programs to coordinate services, which could include data reporting and sharing, alignment of standards and curriculum, and transition plans for children moving from Head Start and into the public school programs for pre-kindergarten or kindergarten.
- The requirement to coordinate also applies to local schools who opt to provide early childhood programming as part of their schoolwide model under Title I.

ESSA and Early Learning: Coordination Requirements

- ***Opportunity:*** The State Department of Education, with support from the Early Learning Council and the Department of Children and Families can help provide the linkages at both the state and local level between the various agencies and provide policy options to implement the requirements of the new law.

ESSA and Early Learning: Data Reporting

- SEAs and LEAs are now required to report on the number and percentage of children enrolled in preschool programs.
- ***Opportunity:*** Existing data efforts through Preschool Development Grant and other efforts (including efforts on chronic absenteeism) may provide the policy recommendations and data infrastructure for state and local leaders to work together to understand where children birth to five are enrolled, whether they are enrolled in multiple settings to create full day and year programs, and to use that data both to identify service gaps and provide longitudinal data on interventions with young children.

ESSA and Early Learning: Local Service Delivery

- If an LEA opts to provide early childhood services using Title I funds, the district must demonstrate in their plan how they will "support, coordinate, and integrate services provided under this part with early childhood education programs."
- **Opportunity:** While the language in the legislation focuses on transition, it also creates a significant opportunity to ensure that new programs do not duplicate services, but rather work with existing programs to ensure all children have the full range of supports they need. This may include full day K, developmental screening/assessment, home visiting, transportation, professional development for community-based teachers, or direct services for infants, toddlers and preschool-aged children. This language may also encourage the local coordination of standards and assessment, as well as data sharing between and across settings.

ESSA and Early Learning: Meeting Standards

- The legislation makes clear that LEAs must demonstrate that any early childhood program funded through Title I funds must meet the Head Start Standards (defined in 641A of the Head Start Act) aligned with the Head Start Child Early Learning Outcomes Framework Ages Birth to Five (2015).
- Further, the legislation now requires USED to work with USHHS to disseminate the standards to school districts, creating opportunities to provide technical assistance and promote coordination between Head Start and school-based early learning programs.
- **Opportunity:** CSDE, DCF, and other early childhood entities can help provide this information and link to appropriate providers of TA and make connections to existing partnerships, such as EHS/CC partners.

ESSA and Early Learning: Professional Development

- Title I, Title II and Title III include language encouraging SEAs and LEAs to expand professional development opportunities to include early childhood providers and to expand the child development knowledge of principals and other school leaders.
- This language promotes joint professional development that includes school staff and community based providers, and that focuses on transition, "issues related to school readiness," and other content designed to meet the needs of students through age 8.
- As states examine their evaluation systems, they may want to include a focused conversation about the different classroom organization strategies, instructional practices, and quality of teacher-child interactions that support high quality early learning settings.
- They may also want to include a focus on coaching and mentoring, as well as peer-to-peer modeling for early childhood and early elementary classrooms.

ESSA and Early Learning: Professional Development

- If implemented well, these provisions could elevate the quality of professional development available to early learning providers, support the goals of the new Child Care and Development Block Grant, and improve alignment and expectations between community based early learning providers and pre-kindergarten and kindergarten teachers in schools.
- **Opportunity:** This could provide new funding for aligned professional development that incorporates child development and includes professionals along the early learning continuum. This can continue the workforce initiatives in the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant.

ESSA and Early Learning: School Improvement

- States are required under the law to identify the lowest performing schools, based on their own indicators.
- LEAs and schools must do a needs assessment, which should include a landscape analysis of the early childhood opportunities available to children in the community. This analysis could focus on a set of key questions designed to identify whether families served by the low-performing school have access to quality.
- Needs assessment may also be used to identify partners for evidence based interventions for early learning, before- and after- school, summer learning and wraparound supports and services.

ESSA and Early Learning—Supporting Early Literacy

- State accountability measures could include indicators of reading progress for children in pre-kindergarten through third grade as part of diagnostic review of school needs/tiering.
- ESSA includes the Literacy Education for All, Results for the Nation (LEARN) grant program which includes a separate allocation for early literacy grants for children from birth through kindergarten entry. Local agencies will apply to the state to create materials, professional development and literacy supports to parents, providers, schools and other staff working with young children.
- Early literacy supports are allowable uses of funds for EL children and other special populations.
- **Opportunity:** The various levers in ESSA to promote early literacy can be used to support the goals of the third grade reading efforts, including new funds, professional development opportunities across early childhood and k-3 classrooms, and alignment of standards and assessments.

ESSA and Early Learning: Competitive Grants

- Preschool Development Grants: ESSA creates a new \$250 million competitive grant program to help states create strategic plans for early learning that coordinate current federal, state and local expenditures for children birth to five, support a variety of settings designed to meet the needs of children and families, improve the quality of early learning programs in the state, and expand access to high quality programs. The new grants will be available to states in FY 2018, and will be managed through the Department of Health and Human Services, jointly with the Department of Education. States will be able to compete for grants in two categories:
 - **COORDINATION GRANTS**
 - **RENEWAL GRANTS**

ESSA and Early Learning—Competitive Grants

- Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants
 - mental health supports, drug prevention, improved health and safety practices, technology/digital literacy, professional learning and other efforts to make schools safe and healthy
 - LEAs must perform a needs assessment every 3 years on goals of the grants
- 21st Century Community Learning Centers
- Charter School grants (now include pre-kindergarten)
- Family Engagement
- Promise Neighborhoods

NEXT STEPS: Policy Options

- Chronic absenteeism with a link to data from subsidy and Head Start data sets
- Support for the kindergarten entry assessments
- Suspension/expulsion data by age/grade and subgroup
- Needs assessment in school improvement
- Coordination with early childhood programs at state/local level
- Joint professional development/planful PD with ECE Workforce plan in CCDBG
- Improved transition planning (including data sharing across auspices, joint professional development, etc)
- Aligned standards especially around social/emotional learning
- Availability of preschool
- Supporting out-of-school time opportunities
- Capacity building for LEARN grants and PDG planning

ECE Policy Questions for ESSA Implementation

Accountability

Can the state include metrics that cross birth to 3rd (i.e., chronic absenteeism, suspension/expulsion)?

How is data used to improve teaching and learning across birth-3rd grade?

How are other early childhood priorities included in reporting requirements?

School Improvement

Are there early childhood interventions included as schools are identified)?

What are the interventions for pk-3?

How does the needs assessment include access to HQ ECE by subgroup?

Assessment and Standards

What assessments are valid and reliable across the birth to 3rd grade?

How can early learning standards and k-3 standards be more closely aligned and implemented in through a coordinated approach??

How can PD be used to support improved alignment across birth to third grade?

All Students College and Career Ready

How is resource equity applied to early childhood programs/pk-3?

What is the role of a KEA in shaping teaching and learning?

How are states including early childhood in building a continuum across pk-12?

The State and ECE in ESSA

How can local delivery of services be expanded?

- Provide guidance on planning for service delivery including avoiding duplication of services
- Highlight various uses of Title I funds
- Promote use of community needs assessments

How can the state plan support quality?

- Promote, explain and provide technical assistance for implementing Head Start standards
- Connect technical assistance providers to LEA

The State and ECE in ESSA

How will the state plan support early learning at the LEA?

- Strong state office of early learning
- Guidance on high quality standards
- Provide technical assistance through partners such as Head Start

How will the state plan support effective transitions?

- Share best practices
- Promote coordination/partnerships
- Encourage local needs assessments
- Transition includes data, standards, PD, ongoing communication

The State and ECE in ESSA

How is the state coordinating with CCDBG/Head Start agencies?

- Support for CCDBG state plan goals
- Coordinated joint PD and technical assistance
- Connecting partners at the state and local level
- Stakeholder engagement opportunities (fully transparent, timely)

How are LEAs coordinating with Head Start and other ECE programs?

- Developing MOU
- Sharing data, curriculum, PD resources
- Understanding gaps in system

Appendix

ESSA Data Reporting Requirements

- By one analysis, there are more than 300,000 discrete items for states to report on.
 - **Data on school quality, climate, and safety** (including rates of in-school suspensions, out-of school suspensions, expulsions, school-related arrests, referrals to law enforcement, chronic absenteeism, and incidences of violence, including bullying and harassment);
 - The **number and percentage of students enrolled in preschool** programs; and
 - The **number and percentage of students enrolled in accelerated coursework** to earn postsecondary credit while still in high school, such as Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses and programs and dual- or concurrent-enrollment programs.

ESSA Data Reporting Requirements

- **Student achievement information** must be reported for the accountability subgroups and for homeless, military-connected, and foster care students.
- **Graduation rates**, as well as student performance on the “other academic indicator” for elementary and middle schools, must be reported for the accountability subgroups, homeless students, and foster-care students.
- Data on the indicator(s) of **school quality or student success**, on progress toward the state’s long-term goals, and on progress against its interim indicators, must be reported for the accountability subgroups.

For more information on data reporting requirements, see: *The Every Student Succeeds Act: What’s In It? What Does It Mean For Equity? Public Reporting* at <https://edtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/What-is-in-ESSA-Public-Reporting.pdf> and *Data Provisions in the Every Student Succeeds Act* at <http://civilrightsdocs.info/pdf/education/ESSA-Data-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

Stakeholder Engagement Opportunities

- Assessments:
 - ESSA maintains requirements that states have annual assessments in grades 3-8 and are encouraged to move beyond the design of traditional assessments.
 - The law also includes a small authorization of funds for states to complete assessment audits.
 - In states that choose this path, assessments in the early elementary grades—including developmental assessments, kindergarten readiness assessments and developmental inventories should be part of the audit.
 - These tools include authentic assessments that include observation, cross the full range of developmental domains and are aligned from birth through kindergarten and into third grade and may help influence the adoption of alternative assessment that can impact instructional practice across the grades, better reflect social-emotional development and embrace both academic and non-academic skills.

Stakeholder Engagement Opportunities

- Educator evaluation and improvement:
 - States now have the opportunity to determine whether and how to continue the systems of educator evaluation that they may have implemented under ESEA waivers.
 - In many states, these systems and indicators were not inclusive or customized to teachers and aides working in pre-k to third grade classrooms.
 - As states examine their evaluation systems, they may want to include a focused conversation about the different classroom organization strategies, instructional practices, and quality of teacher-child interactions that support high quality early learning settings.
 - They may also want to include a focus on coaching and mentoring, as well as peer-to-peer modeling for early childhood and early elementary classrooms.