

Every Student Succeeds Act – Ohio’s Answers to Questions

General Questions

1. What is the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)?

Fourteen years ago, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) defined education policy for students in kindergarten through high school graduation. After many years of revisions to make the law work better for states and districts, Congress passed the Every Student Succeeds Act, or ESSA. ESSA represents a shift toward increased state and local control of elementary and secondary education. However, the federal law maintains strong accountability measures that will ensure students across the country leave our schools with the skills and knowledge they need to be successful in college, careers and life.

2. What doesn’t change with ESSA

Although Ohio will make some adjustments based on new requirements in ESSA, our state will continue to have strong learning standards, state tests and an accountability system (report card). Ohio also will continue to identify and support struggling schools and ensure all students have equitable access to effective teachers.

3. What are the main provisions in ESSA?

ESSA requires states to do the following:

- Adopt challenging academic content standards that align to credit-bearing coursework in the state’s public education system and relevant career-technical standards;
- Annually administer state tests in reading and mathematics in grades 3-8 and once during high school, as well as science assessments in selected grade bands;
- Establish long-term and interim goals of achievement for all students and each student subgroup;
- Develop and implement an accountability system that “meaningfully differentiates” school performance annually. Accountability measures must include academic achievement, graduation rate, an additional achievement measure that may be a growth measure, performance of student subgroups, achievement of English language learners and additional measures of school quality, such as students’ access to rigorous coursework, school climate and absenteeism rates;
- Use their accountability systems to identify schools and districts in need of comprehensive support, as well as those in need of targeted support due to one or more persistently underperforming subgroups of students;
- Provide support for schools and districts identified as needing comprehensive and targeted support; and
- Implement plans that ensure equitable access to effective teachers for poor and minority students.

4. What are new flexibilities offered to states under ESSA?

Rather than a one-size-fits-all goal or standard set by the federal government, states have the flexibility to set both state-level and local goals for improving student achievement and graduation rates. States also have more flexibility in how they identify and support struggling schools and districts.

5. What does ESSA mean for Ohio?

The Ohio Department of Education must develop and submit a plan to the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) that meets the requirements in ESSA.

Although the USDOE is just now starting to release guidance and draft regulations, it's clear that ESSA will mean broad changes to Ohio's primary and secondary education system. It is too soon to say exactly what those changes will be. The department expects that the state plan will describe Ohio's learning standards, state tests, report card system and support for struggling schools and districts. The department will update the state plan to reflect specific requirements as additional information becomes available.

The department is committed to ensuring that Ohio's state plan represents the concerns of all stakeholders and our collective commitment to the success of Ohio's students.

6. When is the state plan due?

The USDOE has not yet released the deadline, but the department expects state plans to be due in early 2017. Ohio's existing state plan (or ESEA waiver) remains in effect until Aug. 1, 2016. States must continue interventions in schools identified as priority and focus schools during the 2016-2017 school year. The 2016-2017 school year will be a transition period with full implementation of the new state plan effective with the 2017-2018 school year.

7. How will Ohio develop its state plan?

Community engagement and collaboration are key to the development of a strong plan. ESSA is very specific about requiring that each state solicit input from a wide variety of stakeholders. The law specifically mentions engaging with parents, teachers, principals and other school leaders, the governor, legislature, State Board of Education and other stakeholders. The department is committed to comprehensive and collaborative stakeholder engagement leading to the development of Ohio's plan to implement ESSA.

8. How is Ohio engaging with stakeholders and soliciting feedback?

The department has developed a multi-phase stakeholder engagement plan.

- **Initial Outreach** (Early – Mid 2016)
During this time, the department is reaching out to education stakeholder groups across the state about their values and priorities related to education. The department also is working with these groups to identify specific areas in ESSA that they are willing to engage in more deeply.
- **Engagement on Specific Topics/Issues** (Mid – Late 2016)
Once there is more specific guidance from the USDOE regarding Ohio's state plan, the department will reconnect with stakeholders to more deeply engage in aspects of interest or concern to them. This engagement will focus more on specific recommendations for Ohio's state plan. During this time, the department will continue to educate and engage more broadly with interested parties through webinars, surveys, regional meetings and focus groups.
- Ohio also will focus on developing an engagement toolkit to assist in facilitating ESSA conversations in Ohio's communities and with other organizations.
- **Draft State Plan Available** (Late 2016)
The department will work to incorporate the feedback and recommendations into a state plan. It will post the plan online for comment for at least 30 days.
- **Finalize and Submit State Plan** (Early 2017)
Based on public comment, the department will make revisions to the state plan so that it accurately reflects the values of Ohio's educators and stakeholders. It will submit the final plan to the USDOE. While there is no date for submission yet, we expect it to be in early 2017.

9. What types of things will be in Ohio's state plan under ESSA?

- Ohio's state plan under ESSA will include:
- Descriptions of Ohio's Learning Standards;
- Explanation of meeting federal testing requirements;

- Descriptions of Ohio’s accountability (report card) system, including new requirements;
- Descriptions of Ohio’s state-level goals for student performance;
- Descriptions of Ohio’s system of support for struggling schools and districts;
- Descriptions of Ohio’s equity plan to ensure poor and minority students have equitable access to effective teachers; and
- Descriptions of Ohio’s systems of support to address barriers for vulnerable student populations, such as homeless students, students in the foster care system, students involved in the justice system, English language learners, etc.

10. How can I get involved?

Individuals wanting more information regarding ESSA or to provide direct comment on Ohio’s state plan should visit the department’s ESSA Web page at: education.ohio.gov/essa.

The department invites those interested to communicate their feedback through organizations that represent them. If you are a member of a professional organization, contact your organization’s leadership to see how you might be able to get involved in this process.