

Title I Summary

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015



Overview

Title I is the largest program supporting elementary and secondary education in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)—the new law that reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act/No Child Left Behind (ESEA/NCLB) which governs the K-12 public school system at the federal level. Public schools receive federal funding from their local education agencies (LEAs) based on the number of low-income students that attend the schools in the district. Title I is Congress' attempt to provide all children with the opportunity to receive a fair, equitable and high-quality education, and to close achievement gaps.

ESSA divides Title I into five parts:

1. Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Education Agencies
2. State Assessment Grants
3. Education of Migratory Children
4. Prevention and Intervention Programs for Children and Youth who are Neglected, Delinquent or At-Risk
5. Flexibility for Equitable Per-Pupil Funding

The focus of this memo will be on Part A of Title I, Improving Basic Programs Operated by LEAs, as it refers to significant changes in the law that reflect State Education Agency (SEA) plans, LEA plans, standards, assessments, accountability requirements and parent and family engagement. The following sections are a brief description of the federal requirements that states and LEAs must assure in order to receive Title I funding.

Parent and Family Engagement

Both state and local education plans under ESSA are required to be developed in consultation with many education stakeholders with an explicit mention of parents in the process. Of significant importance to all parents and PTA is Section 1116—Parent and Family Engagement, formerly Section 1118 of ESEA/NCLB. This section requires LEAs to include a written parent and family engagement policy in their education plan that welcomes all families and seeks to strengthen the partnership between families, school and community to improve student outcomes. The parent and family engagement policy mandates each school to convene an annual meeting with parents and families to explain the curriculum, types of academic assessments used to measure student progress, the challenging state academic standards and the proficiency levels students are expected to meet.

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Section 1116 also requires the reservation of at least 1% of an LEA's Title I-A funds—and includes language stating that nothing prohibits an LEA from spending more than 1%—for parent and family engagement activities to be used to support at least one of the following activities:

- Professional development for LEA and school personnel regarding parent and family engagement strategies
- Programs that reach parents and family members at home, in the community, and at school, such as home visiting
- Disseminating information on best practices for family engagement
- Collaborating and providing subgrants to schools to enable collaboration amongst community-based organizations with a record of success in improving parent and family engagement in schools
- Other activities that LEAs determine to be consistent with their parent and family engagement policy

State Plans

SEAs must submit their state education plans to the U.S. Secretary of Education for approval and once the plan is approved it remains in effect as long as the SEA adheres to the requirements of the law. Under ESSA, secretarial authority over state education plans has diminished in which the Secretary must submit reasoning to a SEA for disapproving their education plan and offer technical assistance to improve the plan. ESSA is also more explicit about the limitations on the Secretary's ability to provide regulatory guidance and prohibits the Secretary from influencing, incentivizing or coercing states to adopt a certain set of standards, assessments and accountability systems.

Challenging State Academic Standards

ESSA requires that each state provide assurance in their state plan that they have adopted challenging academic content standards that are aligned with academic achievement standards (collectively referred to as challenging state academic standards). Each state must have challenging state academic standards in mathematics, reading/language arts, science and any other subject determined by the state. The academic achievement standards must also have at least three levels of achievement—determined by the state—and align the challenging state academic standards with entrance requirements for coursework in the state public higher education system and relevant state career and technical education standards.

Alternate Academic Achievement Standards

States may adopt alternate academic achievement standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities as long as the standards:

- Are aligned with the state's challenging state academic content standards
- Promote access to the general education curriculum
- Are explained in each students' individualized education program (IEP)
- Ensure students are ready for postsecondary education or employment after they graduate from high school

English Language Proficiency

Each state plan under ESSA should ensure that states have adopted English language proficiency standards for speaking, listening, reading and writing that are aligned with challenging state academic standards.

Academic Assessments

The requirement of annual academic assessments in ESSA remained the same from ESEA/NCLB in which each state shall administer an assessment each year in mathematics and reading/language arts in grades 3-8 and once in grades 9-12. The state must also administer a science assessment once in grades 3-5, 6-9 and 10-12. However, ESSA allows states to decide if the assessment is administered through a single summative assessment or through multiple interim assessments during the course of the year that result in a summative score. States may also set a limit on the total amount of time schools devote to administering assessments each year.

All assessment results must be disaggregated within each state, LEA and school by:

- Each major racial and ethnic group
- Economically disadvantaged students
- Children with disabilities
- English proficiency status
- Gender
- Migrant status

Alternate Assessments Aligned with Alternate Academic Achievement Standards

ESSA allows states to provide alternate assessments that are aligned with challenging state academic standards and alternate academic achievement standards for students

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with the most significant cognitive disabilities as long as the number of students assessed using the alternate assessments in a subject does not exceed 1% of the total number of all students in the state who are assessed in that subject. The 1% cap is a state cap and does not apply to students taking alternate assessments at the local level. ESSA also requires the state to clearly inform parents—during the development of their child’s IEP—that taking an alternate assessment may impact a student’s ability to obtain the needed state requirements to receive a regular diploma at the end of high school.

Assessments of English Language Proficiency

Each state shall provide an annual assessment of English proficiency for all English learners in the school that are aligned with a state’s English language proficiency standards.

Locally-Selected Assessment

With the state’s approval, LEAs are allowed to administer a nationally-recognized high school academic assessment instead of the state-designed academic assessment. For a SEA to approve a locally-selected assessment the assessment must:

- Be aligned with the state’s academic content standards
- Provide valid and reliable data on academic achievement that is comparable to the state-designed assessment
- Require the same accommodations, technical criteria and rules for administering the assessment as the state-developed assessment
- Provide unbiased and consistent differentiation between schools for statewide accountability measures

Statewide Accountability

ESSA eliminated annual measurable objectives (AMOs) and adequate yearly progress (AYP) that were required in ESEA/NCLB accountability systems. Under ESSA, states establish state-designed long-term goals and indicators for measuring the academic achievement of all students and each subgroup separately (economically disadvantaged students, students from major racial and ethnic groups, children with disabilities, and English learners).

Under ESSA, states are to create long-term student achievement goals that include interim progress toward meeting:

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- Academic achievement measured by proficiency in annual assessments in mathematics and reading/language arts
- Four-year adjusted cohort graduation rates for high school students (and extended-year adjusted cohort graduation rates at the state's discretion)
- Increases in the percentage of English learners making progress and achieving English language proficiency as defined by the state

Indicators

ESSA requires states to annually measure all students and each subgroup on the following indicators:

1. Academic achievement measured by proficiency on annual assessments in mathematics and reading/language arts (high schools may also use student growth based on annual assessments at the state's discretion)
2. Elementary and middle schools are to measure student growth or another valid and reliable statewide academic indicator
3. Four-year adjusted cohort graduation rates for high schools (and extended-year adjusted cohort graduation rates at the state's discretion)
4. English language proficiency
5. One indicator of school quality or student success that allows for meaningful differentiation of school performance that is used statewide and is valid, reliable, and comparable.

Meaningful Differentiation of School Performance

In order to identify how well public schools are performing states will create their own annual system of meaningful differentiation for all students and for each subgroup of students based on applying “substantial weight” to indicators 1-4 (academic achievement, student growth, four-year adjusted cohort graduation rates and English language proficiency) than indicator 5 (school quality or student success). States must annually measure the achievement of not less than 95% of all students and not less than 95% of all students in each subgroup that attend public schools in the state. Starting in school year 2017-2018, states must identify one statewide category of schools—at least once every three years—for comprehensive support and improvement based on the outcomes of the state-based system for meaningful differentiation of students and subgroups of students in each school.

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Comprehensive Support and Improvement

States must use their system for meaningful differentiation of school performance to identify schools in need of comprehensive support and improvement. Comprehensive support and improvement plans must be implemented in schools that states calculate to be:

- The lowest-performing 5% of schools in the state
- Public high schools in the state that fail to graduate at least 67% of their students
- Schools with a subgroup of students performing at the lowest 5% of all Title I receiving schools that do not improve in a state-set period of time.

LEAs identified as needing comprehensive support and improvement must locally develop a plan to improve outcomes for students that includes evidence-based interventions and identifies resource inequalities. Schools implementing comprehensive supports and improvement plans have a state-determined number of years (not to exceed four years) to meet state-set criteria for improvements or they will have to implement more rigorous state-determined interventions. All students in a school that fall under that category are provided the opportunity to transfer to another public school.

Targeted Interventions

Schools with a consistently underperforming subgroup of students must implement targeted interventions that are evidence-based and locally determined for a LEA determined number of years. States must identify these schools every year. A Title I school with a subgroup of students performing at the lowest-performing 5%—as measured by the state system for meaningful differentiation of school performance—must implement additional targeted supports and identify resource inequalities in its improvement plan. Schools in this category must meet state-set exit criteria within a state-set time period or the school will be identified for comprehensive support and intervention.

School Improvement

ESSA did not retain the school improvement grant program (SIG) from ESEA/NCLB; however, ESSA requires states to reserve up to 7% of their Title I-A funds to provide grants to LEAs to serve schools implementing comprehensive support and improvement activities or targeted supports and improvement activities. States are allowed to reserve the full 7% of their Title I-A funding for school improvement activities in Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 and FY 2017, but beginning in FY 2018 the full percentage states can reserve (7%) for school improvement activities is

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dependent on LEAs receiving the same amount of Title I funding that they did the year before. Each LEA subgrant for school improvement activities shall be awarded for no more than four years.

States may also reserve up to 3% of their Title I-A funds for direct student services. The direct services would allow students in low-performing schools to participate in academic coursework that would not otherwise be available to students at that school (i.e. career and technical education, postsecondary level instruction and examinations, components of personalized learning and academic acceleration courses that lead to a regular high school diploma, among others).

Local Education Plans

ESSA eliminated the highly qualified teacher (HQT) provision but kept the parents right-to-know provision which allows parents to request the qualifications of their child's classroom teacher and be notified if their student is being taught by a teacher that does not meet the state certification or licensure at the grade level and subject they are teaching. LEAs are also responsible for making information on each assessment required by the federal government and other assessments required by the state to be publicly available to parents and families.

Report Cards

State Report Cards

States are required to publicly disseminate a state report card annually that is concise, widely accessible and developed in consultation with parents. Each state report card must include:

- A clear and concise description of the state's accountability system (i.e., state defined long-term goals, indicators and the state's system for meaningful differentiating for all public schools, among others)
- Academic achievement levels for all students, each subgroup of students and students that are homeless, in foster care and have a parent who is a member of the armed forces
- Information on the number and percentage of English Learners achieving English language proficiency
- Information on the performance indicator for student growth and four-year adjusted cohort graduation rates for all students, each subgroup of students, homeless students and students in foster care

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- Information on the performance of the other indicator of school quality or student success for all students and each subgroup of students
- The percentage of students assessed and not assessed for all students and each subgroup of students
- Information from each SEA and LEA on measures of school quality, climate and safety (that include in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, chronic absenteeism and others) as well as the number and percentage of students enrolled in preschool programs and accelerated coursework
- The professional qualifications of teachers in the state
- Per-pupil expenditures of federal, state and local funds
- Number of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who take alternate assessments
- Results on the state academic assessments in reading and mathematics in grades 4 and 8 of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)
- If possible, the cohort rate at which students graduate from high school and enroll in postsecondary education directly after high school
- Other information the state deems necessary to include

Local Report Cards

LEAs are required to publicly disseminate a local report card annually that is concise, widely accessible and developed in an understandable format. All reporting requirements from the state report card apply to the local report cards except for NAEP scores. Also, LEAs must include information on student achievement on academic assessments across the school district and state in their local report cards.

Questions

If you have questions about this memorandum or Title I in general, please contact Joshua Westfall at jwestfall@pta.org or (703) 518-1249.