

Every Student Succeeds Act: Accountability Provisions

December 2015



In November 2015, the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives reached a compromise agreement on a bill to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The bill, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015, is set to become law and will replace No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the previous version of ESEA. ESSA also will supersede the ESEA waivers created by the U.S. Department of Education to provide states with flexibility from certain requirements of NCLB. The following chart compares NCLB, ESEA waivers, and ESSA.

| Policy | No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) | Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Waivers | Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) |
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| Goals for Student Achievement | <p>A federally set goal was made calling for 100 percent of students to reach "proficiency" in math and English language arts by 2014.</p> <p>States must set annual measurable objectives (AMOs) for demonstrating adequate yearly progress toward the goal of having 100 percent of students reach proficiency.</p> | <p>States must set AMOs that either</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduce by half the percentage of students who are not proficient within six years; • are set in annual equal increments toward the goal of having 100 percent of students reach "proficiency" by 2020; or • are ambitious but achievable and must be approved by the U.S. Department of Education. | <p>States must set long-term student achievement goals with measurements of interim progress.</p> |
| Goals for High School Graduation Rates | <p>States must set a long-term high school graduation rate goal and annual targets for meeting that long-term goal that are "continuous and substantial" (as defined in federal regulation).</p> | <p>States must set a long-term high school graduation rate goal and annual targets for meeting that long-term goal that are "continuous and substantial" (as defined in federal regulation).</p> | <p>States must set a long-term goal for the four-year high school graduation rate with measurements of interim progress.</p> <p>States may set goals for extended-year high school graduation rates, but those goals must be higher than the four-year graduation rate goal.</p> |
| Accountability Indicators | <p>Elementary and middle schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • test scores • one indicator selected by the state <p>High schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • test scores • graduation rates | <p>Multiple indicators are permitted.</p> | <p>Elementary and middle schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • test scores • a "measure of student growth" or other academic indicator that allows for meaningful differentiation among student groups • English language proficiency • at least one indicator of school quality or success that allows for meaningful differentiation among student performance <p>High schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • test scores (In addition to this, states may use student growth based on annual assessments.) • four-year graduation rate (In addition to this, states may use an extended-year graduation rate.) • English language proficiency • at least one indicator of school quality or success that allows for meaningful differentiation among student groups |

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| Schools Identified for Comprehensive Reform Based on Performance of All Students | No such requirement. | States must classify the lowest-performing 5 percent of Title I schools as "priority" schools. States must classify Title I high schools with a graduation rate below 60 percent as "priority" or "focus" schools. | States must identify the lowest performing 5 percent of Title I schools for comprehensive support. States must identify all high schools with a graduation rate at or below 67 percent for comprehensive support. States must identify these low-performing schools and low-graduation-rate high schools at least once every three years. |
| Schools Identified for Targeted Reform Based on Performance of Subgroups of Students | Any school that misses a performance target for any subgroup for two or more consecutive years is identified for improvement. | States must classify 10 percent of Title I schools with the largest achievement gaps as "focus" schools. | Any school with a subgroup of students that is consistently underperforming based on all of the indicators in the state accountability system is identified by the state for targeted intervention and support. States must identify these schools annually. |
| Intervention and Support for Struggling Schools | Interventions escalate based on the number of years a school is identified for improvement. Interventions include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • public school choice, • supplemental educational services (i.e., tutoring), • corrective action, and • restructuring. | Priority schools must implement comprehensive interventions that incorporate seven turnaround principles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strong leadership, • effective teaching, • redesigning school time, • strengthening instructional program, • using data to strengthen instruction, • strengthening school climate, and • family and community engagement. Focus schools must implement interventions determined by the school district. | There are two categories of interventions and support: <i>comprehensive</i> and <i>targeted</i> . The following schools must implement <i>comprehensive</i> , locally-determined, evidence-based interventions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lowest-performing 5 percent of Title I schools; • high schools with graduation rates at or below 67 percent; and • schools with a subgroup performing at the level of the lowest-performing 5 percent of all Title I-receiving schools, based on the state accountability system, that do not improve within a state-set period of time. In addition, districts may allow students in these schools to transfer to other public schools in the district. Schools with a low-performing subgroup must implement evidence-based, locally-determined <i>targeted</i> intervention. A school with a subgroup performing at the level of the lowest-performing 5 percent of all Title I-receiving schools, based on the state accountability system, also must identify resource inequities to address through the implementation of its improvement plan. |
| Timeline | Schools must meet increasingly rigorous targets each year or implement interventions that escalate annually. | Priority schools must implement interventions for at least three years; states set criteria to enable schools to exit priority status. States must identify focus schools annually and set criteria to enable schools to exit focus status. | Schools implementing <i>comprehensive</i> interventions have four years to meet state-set criteria allowing them to exit the <i>comprehensive</i> interventions status. If they do not meet these criteria, they must implement more rigorous state-determined interventions, which may include school-level operations. Any school with a subgroup performing at the level of the lowest-performing 5 percent of all Title I-receiving schools that is implementing <i>targeted</i> intervention must reach state-set exit criteria by a state-set time period or the school will be identified for <i>comprehensive</i> support. |

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| Student Assessment Opt-Out | States must assess 95 percent of all students. | States must assess 95 percent of all students. | States must assess 95 percent of all students. |
| School Improvement Funding | A separate federal funding stream is authorized for school improvement. States are required to implement specific intervention models to receive funding. | Not applicable. | States must use 7 percent of their Title I allocations for school improvement activities. States may use 3 percent of their Title I allocations for "direct student services," including Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and other advanced course work; career and technical education that leads to an industry-recognized credential; credit recovery; and personalized learning. |