

# **Transitioning to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA): Standards, Assessments, & Accountability**

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THE CENTER ON  
**STANDARDS &  
ASSESSMENT  
IMPLEMENTATION**

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# Elementary and Secondary Education Act

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- Passed in 1965, ESEA is the biggest federal K12 education law in the U.S.
- ESEA set up the Title I program, which currently provides more than \$15 billion dollars to states to support the education of disadvantaged students.
- There have been many iterations of ESEA since the 1960s, and the law has changed over time
  - Initially – many requirements related to inputs (how money could be used, etc.)
  - Starting in 1994 – more flexibility regarding how money could be used, but an expectation of improved outcomes.



## ESEA (Cont.)

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- No Child Left Behind reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 2002.
  - Required that each State hold *all* students to the same high standards
  - Set the important expectation that schools must be making progress with all groups, not just some
- Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed into law in December 2015, reauthorizing ESEA, replacing NCLB



# ESSA Maintains Core Ideas or Pillars of the Law

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**Promote Educational Excellence and Equity**



**Standards**

**Assessment**

**Disaggregation, Transparency, and Accountability**

**School Support and Interventions**

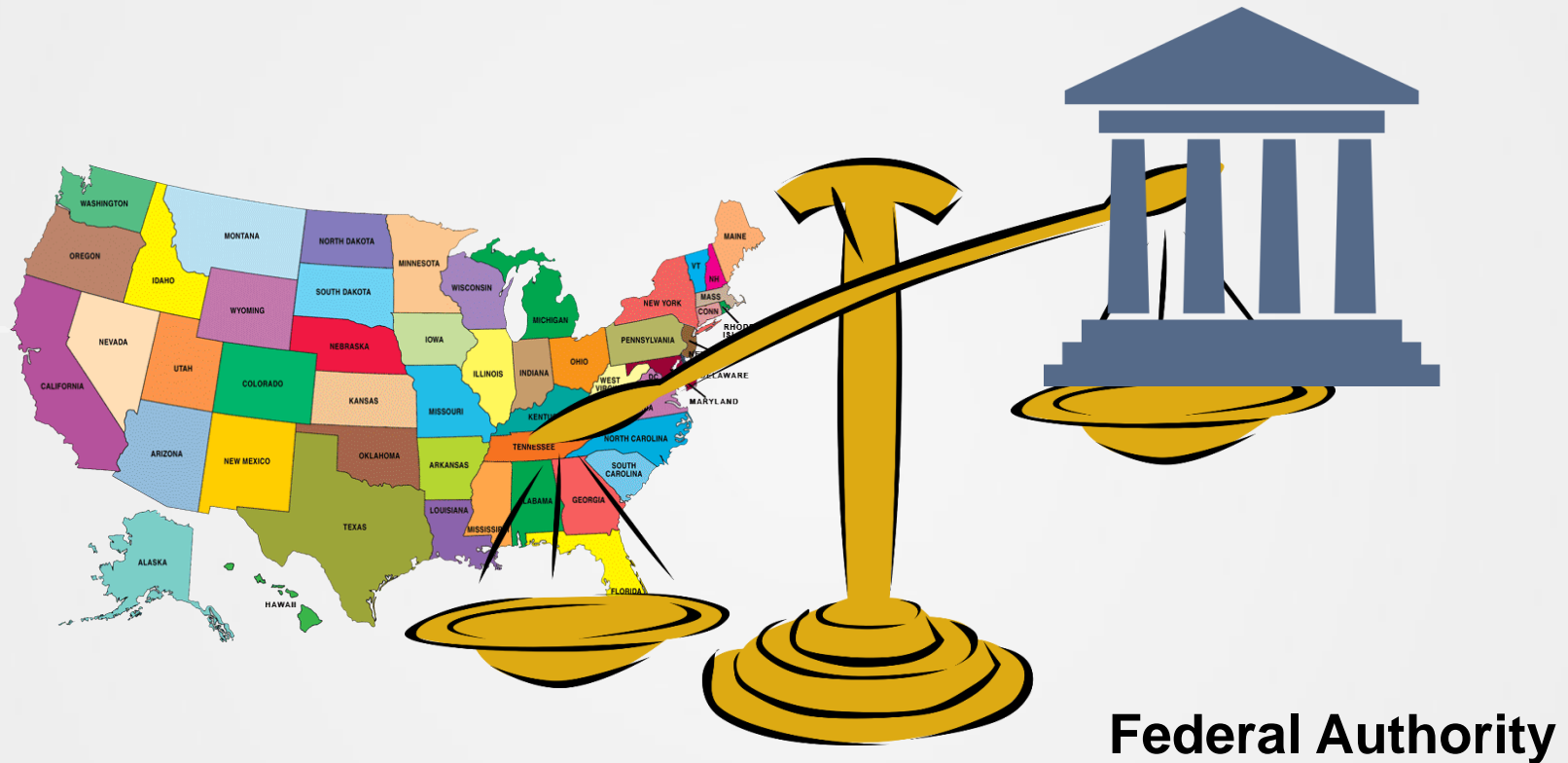


# ESSA – What Has Changed?

Eliminated	Survived	New
<p>Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)</p> <p>Automatic identification of schools that don't meet 95% participation requirement</p> <p>Mandate to achieve universal proficiency by a certain date</p> <p>Federally defined cascade of sanctions (including tutoring and school choice)</p> <p>School Improvement Grants (SIG) program</p>	<p>Requirement to adopt “challenging” state academic standards that apply to all public school students</p> <p>Annual testing in reading and math in grade 3-8 and high school</p> <p>Grade-span testing in science</p> <p>Disaggregated data by subgroups</p> <p>95% participation requirement for accountability (states determine consequence)</p>	<p>Standards must be aligned with credit-bearing courses in college</p> <p>Locally- and school-designed interventions</p> <p>Mandate for state-developed accountability systems with limited federal rules around goals, indicators, and school ratings</p>

Adapted from: Foundation for Excellence in Education, 2015

# ESSA Shift in Balance of Power



**State and Local Autonomy**

**Federal Authority**



# The Process

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# Academic Standards - Policy Lens

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- Standards are statements of what students should know and be able to do at each grade level.
- Having consistent, high expectations for all students is critical as a safeguard against some students being taught at a lower level or less rigorous content than other students.





# Academic Standards Under ESSA

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- States are required to adopt “challenging” statewide academic content and achievement standards in, at minimum, math, reading/language arts, and science.
- The state must set at least three levels of achievement standards (e.g., Advanced, Proficient, and Basic).
- ESSA requires that states ensure that these standards are aligned with entrance requirements for credit-bearing coursework in the public higher education system in the state, as well as with relevant career and technical education standards.

# Academic Standards Under ESSA

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- The same standards must apply to all students in the state, except that states are allowed to set alternate academic achievement standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.
- States must also put in place standards for English-language proficiency that address speaking, listening, reading, and writing, and are aligned with the state's academic standards.

# Key Questions - Standards Under ESSA

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- What is the benefit of having a uniform system of standards for BIE schools?
- What might the challenges be of having a uniform system of standards?
- How will a uniform system promote the academic achievement of all our students?
- How will a uniform system allow for communicating high expectations for all our students?
- How might the BIE demonstrate that academic content standards are aligned to entry requirements for higher education?
- Whose entry requirements (e.g. four-year institutions, community colleges) for credit-bearing coursework will the BIE align standards to?



# Assessment - Policy Lens

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- Annual assessments provide an objective measuring tool to determine student progress across classrooms, schools, and districts
- High-quality assessments:
  - Help expose gaps in performance between various student groups
  - Give schools and systems information they need to get better at educating all students
  - Can inform and improve teaching and learning



# Assessment Under ESSA

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- States are required to administer statewide assessments annually in both mathematics and reading/language arts to every student in grades 3–8 and once in high school, in addition to a science assessment once per grade span (elementary, middle, and high school).
- States must provide accommodations as needed for students with disabilities.
- Assessments must be aligned with state standards and provide information on whether a student is performing at grade level.
- States assessment systems must provide for the participation of all students.



# Assessment Under ESSA

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- States must assess English learner (EL) students in grades K–12 annually for English language acquisition.
- States must include English learners in their academic assessments.
- Assessments may be delivered, **in part**, as projects, portfolios, and/or extended performance tasks.
- States are given the option to administer a single summative assessment or **multiple statewide interim assessments** that result in a single summative score about student achievement and growth.



# Assessment Under ESSA

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- Districts are given the ability to use a nationally recognized high school assessment (e.g., ACT and SAT) in lieu of a state-developed assessment, **provided that the test provides comparable data and is approved by the state.** (Must meet Federal peer review requirements.)
- States **may** set a target limit on the aggregate amount of time spent administering assessments in each grade level.
- States may exempt **8<sup>th</sup> graders** from middle grades math assessments if the students take the end-of-course high school math assessment the State uses for accountability.



# Assessment Under ESSA

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- In assessing students with disabilities, there is a **1% cap at the state level on the number of students** with the most significant cognitive disabilities who can take an alternate assessment in each tested subject.
- If a district believes it will administer the alternate assessment to more than 1% of students, it must submit justification to the state. States may seek a waiver from the secretary of education if the overall 1% state cap is exceeded.





# Assessment Under ESSA

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- For English learners (ELs) enrolled in a US school less than 12 months, State can **either** :
  - ✓ (1) exclude ELs from one administration of the reading or language arts assessment and exclude, for purposes of accountability, results on the math and reading or language arts assessment or EL proficiency assessment; **or**
  - ✓ (2) assess and report EL performance on reading or language arts and math and exclude results from accountability for the first year; include a measure of student growth for the second year; and include proficiency in the third year.



# Key Questions - Assessments Under ESSA

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- What is the benefit of having a uniform system of assessments for the BIE schools?
- What might the challenges be of developing or selecting a uniform set of assessments?
- How will a uniform set of assessments promote the academic achievement of all BIE students?
- How will a uniform set of assessments allow for communicating high expectations for all BIE students?



# Key Questions - Assessments Under ESSA

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- The use of interim assessments and nationally recognized assessments for accountability purposes may present concerns/questions about the validity, reliability, and consistency of tests with nationally recognized professional and technical testing standards; alignment of nationally recognized assessments with state standards; and **comparability** of assessment results.
- Why might it be important that the BIE can compare test scores of all BIE students?

# Accountability - Policy Lens

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- Well-designed accountability systems:
  - Set a clear expectation that schools must raise the achievement of all of their students, not just some.
  - Focus attention and resources on the full range of student groups, including those who may be traditionally underserved.
  - Can signal priorities for the organization.
  - Prompt action when schools don't meet expectations for any group of students.



# Accountability Under ESSA

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- The statewide accountability system shall be based on the **challenging State academic standards** for reading or language arts and mathematics to improve student academic achievement and school success
- States must provide a clear explanation for how they will factor the **95 percent participation requirement**, overall and by student group, into the school accountability system.



# Accountability Under ESSA

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- States are required to **establish long-term goals that include measures of interim progress**, for student achievement, high school graduation rates, and English language proficiency.
- Goals have to set an **expectation that all groups that are behind will make significant progress in closing gaps** in achievement and graduation rates.



# Accountability Under ESSA - Indicators

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- States are solely responsible for the development of **accountability systems** that include **multiple measures**:
  1. **Proficiency on annual assessments** in reading and mathematics only
  2. **Academic success** (which could include growth on statewide tests for elementary and middle schools; or include additional subject areas);
  3. **Graduation rates** for high schools;
  4. **Progress in achieving English language proficiency**; and
  5. **At least one additional factor of school quality or student success** that allows for meaningful differentiation among student groups (e.g., student engagement, educator engagement, access to and completion of advanced coursework, school climate/safety, and college and career readiness).

## Accountability Under ESSA - Meaningful Differentiation

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- States must establish a system of meaningfully differentiating, on an annual basis for public schools in the State:
  - Each of indicators 1 – 4 must be afforded “substantial weight”; and in the aggregate, much “greater weight” must be given to them (1-4) than the indicator or indicators described in 5.





# Accountability Under ESSA - Minimum Number of Students

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With respect to disaggregation

- A minimum number of students to be included in the disaggregated groups must be established
  - Minimum number applies to all students and each subgroup of students
  - Must be statistically sound
  - Must not reveal any personally identifiable information



# Accountability Under ESSA - Low Performing Schools

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**School identification:** The school accountability system has to identify, at minimum,

- **Comprehensive Support and Improvement Schools,** including:
  1. Title I schools that are in the lowest performing 5 percent of Title I schools in the state
  2. All high schools that fail to graduate one-third or more of their students
  3. Additional targeted support schools that do not meet the State's exit criteria

# Accountability Under ESSA - Low Performing Schools

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- **Targeted Support and Improvement Schools:** Any school that is “consistently underperforming” for one or more student groups.
- **Additional Targeted Support Schools:** Any school whose results for any student subgroup meet the criteria for the lowest performing 5 percent of Title I schools in the state for students overall.

# Accountability Data & Reporting Under ESSA

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- In addition to other requirements, State and local report cards must include the following information:
  - Disaggregated achievement in reading/language arts, math, and science at each achievement level
  - Disaggregated graduation rates
  - Disaggregated results for all accountability measures, with the exception of ELP
  - Disaggregated assessment participation rates
  - Disaggregated rates of exclusionary discipline and access to advanced coursework
  - If available, rate at which high school cohorts matriculate to higher education (disaggregated by subgroup)

# Key Questions - Accountability Under ESSA

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- What is the benefit of having a uniform system of accountability for the BIE schools?
- What might the challenges be of developing or selecting a uniform accountability system?
- How will a uniform accountability system promote the academic achievement of all BIE students?
- How will a uniform accountability system allow for communicating high expectations for all BIE students?



# Key Questions - Accountability Under ESSA

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- Beyond tests and graduation rates, what indicators will add to the transparent picture of school performance?
- What might constitute a rigorous definition of “consistently underperforming” for groups?
- What might be appropriate supports and interventions for the lowest performing schools?



# Key Questions - Accountability Under ESSA

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- What measures could be used to meet the School Quality or Student Success indicator requirement in the accountability system?
- Consider what “much greater weight” or “substantial weight” mean?
- How might participation rate (95%) be accounted for in a uniform accountability system?
- How might BIE address schools with less than 95% participation rates?



# Key Questions - Accountability Under ESSA

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- How can the data be presented in a way that is useful to parents and community leaders?
- What kinds of tools, training, or accompanying materials would help parents and advocates use this information to fight for stronger opportunities to learn for all children?





**For more information, please contact:**

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