The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 replaces the No Child Left Behind Act.

States must submit plans for implementing ESSA by Spring of 2017. ESSA provides greater flexibility and decision-making to States and prohibits the US Department of Education or other federal agencies from dictating or requiring specific curriculum or specific tests. ESSA rules govern Alabama’s federal education programs funding for over $500,000,000 annually.

Helpful websites and contact information:

The Alabama Every Student Succeeds Act Implementation Committee is interested in your ideas! Comments will be accepted until October 30 at https://form.jotform.com/61555715735158.


Email ALSDE your comments at essawg@alsde.edu
ESSA Reporting of School and District Accountability Report
- States develop accountability reporting plans for U.S. Department of Education approval.
- Must “meaningfully separate” school performance.
- Must contain at least four measures including achievement, graduation rate, and at least one other measure which may be a growth measure.
- Report cards must break out data by student groups.
- Report cards must contain at least one non-academic measure of quality broken out by student group (like college readiness, access to advanced coursework, or career credentials)
- AYP is replaced by state-defined measures of performance.
- States must continue to report progress toward closing achievement gaps.

School Improvement under ESSA
- States must identify schools for “comprehensive support and improvement” and “targeted support and improvement”
- States must identify schools in the lowest 5% of performance and high schools with graduation rates below 67%.
- States must identify schools with persistently poor performance by student groups at least every three years.
- Local school systems are responsible for monitoring school improvement plans that are evidence-based and that address school level needs.
- After three years with no improvement, the state will assist.

Other features of ESSA
- Contains features to continue programs to assist English Language Learners.
- Includes preschool development grant programs to ensure access to quality early childhood programs.
- Early childhood programs are eligible for literacy funding.
- Includes programs to improve achievement for students in foster care, students involved in the juvenile justice system, and students in danger of dropping out of school.
- Continues the requirement that federal funds be used to “add to” but not “replace” other types of education funding.

ESSA Education Standards
- State-defined education standards in English language arts and math must be aligned to credit-bearing coursework in state universities (reducing the need for retaking high school level classes in college.)
- The US Department of Education is prohibited from making states use education standards.
- States develop education standards for all subjects and all grade levels.
- Measures of mastery of education standards must be reported by at least three performance levels (such as “exceeds standards,” “meets standards,”, or achievement is “below standards”

ESSA Student Achievement Measures
- Testing is required in Math and English Language Arts in Grades 3-8 and once in high school.
- Testing is required in science once in elementary grades, once in middle grades, and once in high school.
- States determine the tests to be used; states may use national tests such as ACT for high school.
- Results of testing must be reported by broken out student groups (poverty, ethnicity, special education, ELL, migrant status, homeless, foster, etc.)
- Requires that 95% of students participate in state tests.
- Results must be reported in at least three performance levels.

What is included:
- Alabama determines teacher certification requirements.
- Alabama determines education standards and student testing.
- Alabama determines annual achievement goals and sets criteria for reporting school and system performance.
- Stakeholders must be included in the planning process.

What is NOT included:
- Federal requirements and definitions for “highly qualified” teachers.
- Federal definitions of education standards and federal selection of student tests.
- Federal definitions of “Adequate Yearly Progress” (AYP) and failing schools.
- Federal decisions about interventions for poor performing schools.

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