

# Key State Decisions Required Under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

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## Statewide Accountability System

- Each state plan must include a description of the statewide accountability system – key decisions include:
  - The minimum number of students (n-size) that the State determines are necessary with respect to the disaggregation of information, including:
    - How that number is statistically sound;
    - How such minimum number of students was determined by the State, including how the State collaborated with teachers, principals, other school leaders, parents, and other stakeholders when determining such minimum number; and
    - “How the State ensures that such minimum number is sufficient to not reveal any personally identifiable information”
  - States will have to establish “ambitious long-term goals, which shall include measurements of “interim” progress toward meeting such goals.” States must decide what constitutes “ambitious” “long-term” and “interim.”
  - These goals include:
    - Academic achievement as measured by proficiency on annual state assessments; and
    - Graduation rates in which states must decide if they want to use the extended-year rate in addition to the required 4-year cohort graduation rate.
    - With respect to English learners, increases in the percentage of student making progress achieving English language proficiency, within a timeline which must be determined by the State.
  - States will have to annually measure for all students and separately for each subgroup of students, the following indicators:
    - For all schools and “based on the long-term goals”, academic achievement as measured by proficiency on annual state assessments and at the discretion of the state, student growth on such assessments for each public high school in the state;
    - For non-high schools, any other measure of growth as determined by the state (not necessarily based on the state assessments), or another “valid and reliable indicator that allows for meaningful differentiation in school performance”;
    - For high schools, graduation rates in which states must decide if they want to use the extended-year rate in addition to the required 4-year cohort graduation rate.
    - For all schools, progress of ELs in attaining English language proficiency – states must decide what is meant by “progress.” This could be just a continuation of the indicator a state is currently using under the similar NCLB language in Title III;
    - For all schools, one additional school quality or student success indicator – states must decide what additional indicator or indicators they

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- will use that allow for “meaningful differentiation in school performance.”
- States must develop a system to “meaningfully differentiate” all public schools in the state based on the indicators noted above.
    - In developing such a system, states will have to decide how much weight to assign to each indicator, while ensuring that each such indicator has “substantial weight.”
    - States must also ensure that, in the aggregate, the indicators which do not include the “additional school quality or student success indicators,” are assigned a “much greater” weight. States will need to decide what constitutes “substantial” and “much greater.”
    - States will need to decide whether to count former ELs as part of the EL subgroup for up to four years after they exit EL status. (Under the regulations for NCLB, this was allowed only for up to two years.)
    - Based on the wording of the statute, the indicator measuring progress of ELs in attaining English proficiency does not need to be an annual indicator. Unless the Department requires through regulation that it must be annual, states will need to decide how often to use this indicator.
  - States must decide a methodology for identifying schools (based on the system of differentiation), for comprehensive support and improvement (CSI), and for determining if additional categories of schools, beyond what is required by the new law, should be included. This must be “not less than the lowest-performing 5 percent of all schools receiving funds under this part in the State.”
  - ESSA requires that high schools that graduate fewer than two-thirds of their students be identified for comprehensive support and improvement (this identification is to be made based on the four-year adjusted cohort rate). Unless the Department regulates on this issue, states will need to decide what rate to use.
  - States must decide how the requirement that 95% of all students and students in each subgroup participate in assessments will factor into their state accountability systems.
  - Districts with schools identified by the state for comprehensive support and improvement must develop a plan for each such school.
    - States must determine the plan approval process and what will be required for approval. They must also develop the process by which the state will provide on-going monitoring and review of the plan.
    - States must decide if they will permit differentiated improvement activities for high schools that predominantly serve students who are either retuning back to school after dropping out or are significantly off track to graduate.
    - States must decide if they will permit high schools with a total enrollment of less than 100 students to forgo otherwise required improvement activities.
  - States must notify districts if they have any school where any subgroup of students is consistently underperforming. These schools will be identified for Targeted Support and Improvements (TSI).
    - States must decide what constitutes “consistently” and “underperforming.”

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- States must decide how frequently to identify these schools.

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