



EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR RURAL EDUCATORS

ACRES

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Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Brief History

- The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was signed into law in 1965. From its inception, ESEA was a civil rights law.
- NCLB 2001 (PL 107-110) put in place measures that exposed achievement gaps among traditionally underserved students and their peers and spurred an important national dialogue on education improvement. Focus on accountability - AYP.
- In 2012, began granting flexibility regarding specific requirements of NCLB in exchange for rigorous and comprehensive state- developed plans designed to close achievement gaps, increase equity, improve the quality of instruction, and increase outcomes for all students.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

- Passed with bipartisan support
- President Obama signed December 10, 2015 (PL 114-95)
- Final Regulations issued November 29, 2016
- Also released a Consolidated State Plan Template required to be used
- January 20, 2017 – “Regulatory Freeze Pending Review” that delays the effective date for regulations concerning accountability and State plans until March 21, 2017 – to review questions of law and policy that regulations may raise
- Reviewing the Consolidated State Plan Template to ensure they require only descriptions, information, assurances, and other materials that are “absolutely necessary”

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

- A revised Consolidated State Plan Template will be developed that meets the “absolutely necessary” requirement by March 13, 2017
- February 7, House passed resolutions revoking two sets regulations: the ESSA accountability regulations (H.J. Res. 57) (Rep Todd Rokita (R-IN), Chair of Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education) and the HEA teacher prep regulations (H.J. Res. 58) (Rep Brett Guthrie (R-KY) new Chair of Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training)
- State may use current State template as a guide. Will still accept consolidated State plans April 3 or September 18, 2017. NC already sharing its plan
- August 2017-July 2018 - New state accountability systems fully implemented
 - *2018-2019 – ID schools for additional targeted support and improvement*
 - *2019-2010 – ID “consistently underperforming” subgroups of students for targeted support and improvement*

ESSA General Statutory Requirements

- States must still develop comprehensive system of standards (college and career-ready), assessments, and accountability for all schools
- Requires states to engage with multitude of stakeholders to inform decision-making
- Must assess all students - All students with disabilities must be assessed annually (language arts/math annual grades 3-8, once in HS, science at least once in elementary, middle, and high school)
- States have flexibility to develop new assessment designs, which may include multiple statewide interim assessments during academic year that result in a sign summative assessment score (“modular” assessments)
- State ownership of achievement goals, ratings indicators, and supports
 - *States set own goals from their own starting points*
 - *Statewide, long-term goals and interim progress targets for improving outcomes for all students and each student group*
 - *Four-year cohort graduation rates with interim progress targets*

ESSA Flexibility for locally selected, nationally recognized HS academic assessments

- Districts, with state approval, may use nationally recognized HS assessments – must use in all HS in district
- “nationally recognized” – recognized by IHEs for purposes of entrance or placement in courses (ACT, SAT)
- Focus on assessing versus specific “how to do” regulations
- States may still adopt alternate standards for students with the most significant disabilities, however, the standards must now lead to students’ college or career readiness

Highly Qualified Teacher / “ineffective”

- Teacher evaluations through student outcomes no longer as was under NCLB – AYP GONE!
- HQT – thing of the past
- States now required to report data on teachers’ qualifications on high- and low-poverty schools
- States must describe strategies to ensure low-income and minority students are not taught at a disproportionate rate by ineffective, out-of-field or inexperienced teachers
- “ineffective” replaces NCLB’s “unqualified” – ESSA does not define “ineffective” – States will define
- NCLB’s Teacher Incentive Fund is now Teacher and School Leader Innovation Program
 - *Grants to districts that want to try out performance pay and other teacher-quality improvement measures*
 - *Also includes resources to train teachers on literacy and STEM (STEM Master Teacher Corps Program) to attract/retain teachers, especially in high-poverty rural schools*
 - *ESSA ensures equitable distribution of these grants between urban and rural areas*

ESSA Key Provisions for SWD

- Maintains requirement to disaggregate key data
- Recognized IEP team is in best position to make critical decisions regarding students' academic, assessment, and social emotional needs
- Includes **Specialized Instructional Support Personnel (SISP)** in a more intentional and strategic way. SISPs can implement early intervention programs to help ID students who need specific support early on
 - *IDEA uses the term “related service personnel”*
 - *SISP & “related service personnel” = exact same professionals*
 - *SISP will become the new term used in all educational laws*

ESSA Key Provisions for SWD

- Access to appropriate accommodations (i.e., AT) for assessments
- Cap of 1% of total number of all students in state that can be assess using alternative assessments aligned to alternative academic achievement standards (states will need to examine school districts putting too many students in alt assessment plans)
- Acknowledges right of parents/guardians to opt children out of statewide academic assessments were state or local policies allow
- The impact ESSA will have on SWD will depend in large part on the involvement and scrutiny agencies and advocates give to the development of state plans, especially for the statewide accountability system that will be used to distinguish school performance and schools in need of improvement. This also will hold for subgroups.

Rural Schools & Pre-ESSA

- Rural LEAs generally do not benefit from federal funding on par with urban/suburban
- Title 1 funding – distributed on # of low-income students and concentrations of poverty
- Formal tends to favor urban districts with larger numbers of low-income students
- Rural school not able to capitalize on competitive grants to same degree
- NCLB – AYP disproportionately difficult for small rural schools (1 student impact)
- NCLB – mandate to provide HQT for every child in every subject
- Recruit and retain teachers challenge
- NCLB school improvement models (4 choices) did not translate well into rural communities

ESSA & Rural Schools

- States have more control for education
- Over half of our nation's school districts are in rural areas, educating a diverse population often in remote and far-reaching areas.
- ESSA does explicitly address needs of rural schools in grant programs and other requirements
- The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) improves the treatment of rural schools over previous iterations of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).
- Term “rural” appears 54 times in ESSA legislation
- Changes to Title II formula (which features teacher quality) has potential to be a benefit to rural states

NCLB & Rural Schools

- Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP) – NCLB
 - *Small School Rural Achievement Program (SRSA)*
 - <600 students or <10 persons per square mile
 - USDOE – apply direct – grant range from \$20,000 - \$60,000
 - *Rural and Low-Income Schools (RLIS)*
 - Formula grants to states, subgrants to rural LEAs
 - At least 20% of children below poverty line

ESSA & Rural Schools

- Changes to Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP) – with ESSA
 - *Update of locale codes: REAP was updated to include the new locale codes that have been developed by the Census Bureau and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Locale codes determine which districts are considered rural, and determine part of the eligibility requirement for both REAP and the Small and Rural Schools Achievement Program (SRSA). These locale codes are more accurate and have been phased in as various rural programs are reauthorized across all federal agencies.*
 - *Adjustment in the sliding scale: ESSA updates the sliding formula from NCLB's \$20,000 to \$60,000 to a new scale of \$25,000 to \$80,000. ESSA's higher minimum and maximum grants could help rural districts better meet their needs*
 - *Flexibility in the program: Under NCLB, if a district is eligible for both REAP and SRSA, they were automatically enrolled in SRSA. Under ESSA, districts eligible for both programs but not receiving additional funding under the SRSA can apply under the Rural and Low-Income Schools Program (RLIS).*

U.S. Education Department Rural Study

- ESSA requires the U.S. Education Department to conduct a study of how the Department is incorporating the unique needs and characteristics of rural schools.
- The Department has to "assess the methods and manner through which [they]...take into account, consider input from and address the unique needs and characteristics of rural schools and rural local education agencies."
- The report must also determine actions the Department can take to meaningfully increase the consideration and participation of rural schools/districts in the development and execution of USED's processes, policies and regulations.
- The report must be completed *within 18 months of ESSA being signed into law, and the report must be made available to the Senate and House education committees.*

ESSA & Rural Schools

- Education Innovation and Research Program
 - *Grants to engage in practices to support student achievement*
 - *25% with REAP eligible local codes*
- Full Service Community Schools grants (15% must be awarded to rural LEAs)
- Six other grants programs include language that requires USDOE to take steps to ensure “geographic diversity” or “equitable distribution across urban, rural, and suburban schools”
 - *Teacher and School Leader Incentive Funds*
 - *American History and Civics Education*
 - *School Leader Recruitment and Support*
 - *STEM Teacher Corps*
 - *21st Century Learning Centers*
 - *Grants to Support High Quality Charter Schools*

ESSA & Native Students

ESSA also creates new opportunities for states, local districts, and tribal organizations to work together to meet the educational needs of Native students. State leaders are required to engage in meaningful consultation with tribes in the development of state plans, and LEAs that serve more than 50 percent Native students are required to consult with tribes on school plans. In addition, through the State Tribal Education Partnership (STEP) program, the law promotes tribal self determination by authorizing coordination and collaboration of tribal education agencies (TEAs) with state education agencies. ESSA provides a one-time, one-year funding opportunity for tribes to plan and develop a TEA. Learn more at <http://www.niea.org>

ESSA Adopts Urban-Centric Local Codes from National Center for Educational Statistics (2007)

- Districts eligible for REAP funding must have codes 32, 33, 41, 42, or 43
- Approximately 6,000 districts are eligible for REAP funding (Brenner, 2016)
 - 32 – *Town, Distant: Territory inside an urban cluster that is more than 10 miles and less than or equal to 35 miles from an urbanized area*
 - 33 – *Town, Remote: Territory inside an urban cluster that is more than 35 miles from an urbanized area*
 - 41 – *Rural, Fringe: Census-defined rural territory that is more than 5 miles but less than or equal to 25 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is less than or equal to 2.5 miles from an urban cluster*
 - 42 – *Rural, Distant: Census-defined rural territory that is more than 5 miles but less than or equal to 25 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is more than 2.5 miles but less than or equal to 10 miles from an urban cluster*
 - 43 – *Rural, Remote: Census defined rural territory that is more than 25 miles from an urbanized area and is also more than 10 miles from an urban cluster*

Panel Discussion

- Mindy Myers is the Director of Special Education from Unicoi County Schools in Erwin, Tennessee

ESSA: “Large, Messy, and Full of Opportunity”

- Standards
- Assessments
- Accountability
- School Improvement
- Educator Recruitment, Preparation, and Support

STANDARDS

- How do we define “challenging academic standards” in rural and small rural schools?
- What resources and support do rural schools require to meet this expectation?
- How can standards in math, reading, literacy, and social studies address the rural culture and context?

ASSESSMENTS

- Does technology provide the necessary tools to support appropriate assessment systems for rural?
- What types of flexibility should be extended to rural schools that is unique from urban schools?
- How can assessment mandates support documentation of individual student growth?

ACCOUNTABILITY

- What reporting requirements can be eliminated through ESSA provisions?
- Can flexibility be provided in accountability systems that doesn't lead to the easy way out that always leads back in?
- What are the non-negotiables for accountability?

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

- What intervention strategies are most promising to improve low-performing schools in rural communities?
- How can federal, state, and local resources be utilized most effectively to improve rural schools that are struggling?

LOCATING, PREPARING, AND SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE EDUCATORS

- WHAT ARE THE MOST PROMISING PIPELINE STRATEGIES FOR IDENTIFYING PROSPECTIVE EDUCATORS?
- HOW CAN EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAMS CHANGE TO MEET THE NEEDS OF RURAL SCHOOLS?
- WHAT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT APPROACHES CAN ASSIST RURAL SCHOOLS TO BUILD CAPACITY?

Sources for More Information

- Learn more about REAP, check your district's eligibility, and apply for funds at <https://www2.ed.gov/nclb/freedom/local/reap.html>.
- Learn more about Title II in your state, including who to contact, at <https://title2.ed.gov/Public/Home.aspx>
- Learn more about community schools at <http://www.communityschools.org>
- ESSA requires that no less than 15 percent of these funds be directed to implement Promise Neighborhoods in rural areas. Learn more at <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/promiseneighborhoods/index.html>
- ESSA requires the U.S. Department of Education to conduct a study on how it can more effectively address the unique needs of rural schools and to identify actions to “meaningfully increase the consideration and participation of rural schools” in the development of processes and regulations. If you are interested in sharing your ideas, e-mail the Department at rural@ed.gov
- ESSA: Key Provisions and Implications for Students with Disabilities
http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/2016/ESSA/ESSA_Key_Provisions_Implications_for_SWD.pdf

Sources for More Information

- Rural Education Achievement Program
<https://www2.ed.gov/nclb/freedom/local/reap.html>
- BRENNER, D.. Rural Educator Policy Brief: Rural Education and the Every Student Succeeds Act. **The Rural Educator**, North America, 37, Aug. 2016. Available at:
<http://epubs.library.msstate.edu/index.php/ruraleducator/article/view/336/333>.
[Date accessed: 04 Mar. 2017.](#)
- Making ESSA Work for Rural Students, Schools, and Communities: A Brief Guide for Educators and Policymakers http://battelleforkids.org/docs/default-source/publications/makingessaworkforruraleducatorsschools_final.pdf?sfvrsn=2
- Making the Most of the Every Student Succeeds Act: A Reference Guide (and Our Advice) for States, Districts, Advocates, & Funders to Advance State Goals
<http://education-first.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Education-First-Making-the-Most-of-ESSA-May-2016.pdf>