

Advocating for schools using ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act)

NJEA urges every local association to prepare members and organize communities to advocate on behalf of students using the newfound flexibility in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

Under the law, school districts must consult with school staff, parents, and other community groups to establish goals and develop critical educational policies.

Meeting Agenda

1. The Every Student Succeeds Act, which replaced No Child Left Behind (NCLB), opens the door for real opportunity. It:

- **Marks the first substantial change to U.S. education policy in over 14 years.** As a bipartisan law with broad Republican support, it is unlikely to be threatened by the current Congress.
- **Calls for less federal intrusion into the teaching and learning process,** but leaves many decisions to the states.
- **Requires partnerships with parents and communities** to advocate for students and to drive student learning.
- **Allows local stakeholders to shape policies** impacting multiple topics, such as local accountability, school discipline, resource equity, and more.
- **Eliminates Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)** and other metrics.
- **Requires multiple measures and a new indicator of student success** defined by each state and provides states with many flexibility options.
- **Enables local school districts to choose their own specific goals**

2. Key priorities under ESSA include:

- Developing meaningful and sustained local stakeholder engagement with teachers, paraprofessionals, other school employees, parents, and other community members.
- Increased flexibility for states to design school accountability systems, school interventions, and student support.
- Opportunity for states to work with local stakeholders to develop support systems

- Increased state and local flexibility in the use of federal funds

3. ESSA Implementation Timeline

- Fall 2016: NJEA and NJDOE held four regional meetings for input on developing new measures of school success. NJEA also engaged members at Fall Focus meetings.
- 2016-17: A “transitional year” for school districts as the state prepares its accountability plan
- Feb.-March 2017: State Accountability Plan reviewed and public comment period begins
- April 2017: State submits plan to USDOE
- July 1, 2017: Superintendent must certify the functioning of Local ESSA Stakeholder Teams (but the process must start NOW!)
- 2017-18: Full ESSA implementation

4. What NJEA is doing:

- **Pressing for a state implementation plan** that minimizes testing, maximizes other multiple measures, and steps away from the “punish and blame” NCLB model.
- **Encouraging local associations to organize** to influence development of local implementation plans and ensure ongoing engagement in those discussions.

5. LOCALS: TAKE ACTION NOW!

- **Identify a local “ESSA Coordinator.” Send his/her contact information to your NJEA UniServ office.**
- **Identify and engage a “stakeholder engagement team”** with pro-education community partners (PTA/PTO, civil rights groups, other local groups).
- **Encourage these partners to volunteer for the school district team** that will be required to provide input to the district on local ESSA implementation, giving the community an opportunity to decide its own educational priorities. **This opportunity enables us to advocate on a host of issues that are traditionally not negotiated at the bargaining table.**
- **Attend an NJEA training session** for ESSA Stakeholder Engagement Teams. (*More details to come.*)