

Every Student Succeeds Act Primer: Accountability

December 2015



Under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015, states are accountable for focusing resources on low-performing schools and traditionally underserved students who consistently demonstrate low academic performance.

State goals and accountability systems. States are required to establish long-term goals for, at minimum, student achievement, high school graduation rates, and English language proficiency with measurements of interim progress. States also must establish multiple-measure accountability systems that include

- student scores on annual assessments and, at the state's discretion, for high schools also may include student growth based on annual assessments in addition to students' annual assessment scores;
- English language proficiency;
- at least one indicator of school quality or success that allows for meaningful differentiation among student performance;
- for elementary and middle schools, a "measure of student growth" or other academic indicator that allows for meaningful differentiation in student performance; and
- for high schools, graduation rates.

Comprehensive support and improvement schools. Schools are identified for comprehensive support and improvement based on the performance of all students. At least once every three years, states must identify the lowest-performing 5 percent of Title I schools and high schools with graduation rates at or below 67 percent for comprehensive, locally-determined, evidence-based intervention. These schools have up to four years to meet state-set criteria that would allow them to exit the comprehensive support and improvement status. If the schools do not meet these criteria, they must implement more rigorous state-determined interventions. In addition, districts may allow students in these schools to transfer to other public schools in the district.

Targeted support and improvement schools. Schools are identified for targeted support and intervention based on the performance of student subgroups. Annually, states must identify any school with any student subgroup that is consistently underperforming based on all indicators in the state accountability system. Those schools must receive targeted, locally-determined, evidence-based intervention. If implementation of targeted interventions is unsuccessful in improving student outcomes based on the indicators in the state accountability system, additional action may be taken after a number of years to be determined by the district.

Other support and improvement schools. A school with a student subgroup performing at the level of the lowest-performing 5 percent of all Title I-receiving schools, based on the state accountability system, must receive targeted support. That school also must identify resource inequities to address through the implementation of its improvement plan. If these schools do not reach state-set criteria for exiting targeted-support status within a state-set time period, the school will be identified for comprehensive support and improvement.

School improvement funding. States must use 7 percent of their Title I allocations for school improvement activities. States may use 3 percent of their Title I allocations for "direct student services," including Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and other advanced course work; career and technical education that leads to an industry-recognized credential; credit recovery; and personalized learning.

Policy	No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)	Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Waivers	Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)
Requires accountability based on adequate yearly progress (AYP) toward the goal of having 100 percent of students reach proficiency in math and English	Yes	No	No
Requires state accountability system with more than two indicators	No	Permits	Yes
Requires federally-determined interventions in low-performing schools	Yes (i.e., school choice and supplemental educational services)	Yes (within the lowest-performing 5 percent of Title I schools and high schools with a graduation rate below 60 percent)	No