

Every Student Succeeds Act Statewide Listening Tour Round #2

Illinois Education Association Member Guidance

Listening Tour Information

On December 10, 2015, President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) into law, reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act through fiscal year 2020, and replacing the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

The Every Student Succeeds Act shifts greater authority for academic standards, school accountability, and education policy back to states, school districts, teachers, and parents, creating a more balanced role for the federal government in education policy.

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) must now develop an ESSA implementation plan with the help of teachers, parents, school administrators, and other stakeholders. To gather feedback from these stakeholders, ISBE is hosting a series of statewide listening tours.

www.isbe.net/essa

To ensure that your voice is heard, the IEA encourages you to attend the listening tour and share your ideas on how this important new law should be implemented in Illinois.

The following guidance has been developed concerning the design of a new state-designed accountability system. The IEA Executive Committee has identified this topic as a priority and wants to ensure our members have the information they need to respond to the proposals of the ISBE and actively participate in the statewide listening tour.

State-Designed Accountability Systems

ESSA allows states to create new accountability systems that ensures equitable learning opportunities for all students. ESSA eliminates NCLB's Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) system that set unrealistic targets for improving student performance based solely on test scores. States can now select indicators beyond those the federal government requires and set their own goals based on local context.

This is an opportunity to design an accountability system that contains more robust measures of student learning; that provides educators with information to improve their practice; and supports local districts abilities to adjust their efforts to best support students and their teachers.

In addition, this is an opportunity to design an accountability system that leverages improvement rather than labeling and sanctioning schools. Our new accountability system must emphasize indicators that have the greatest influence on student success and create incentives and opportunities to ensure all students are successful.

ESSA requires that a state’s accountability system must have the following indicators:

- Academic achievement as measured by proficiency on annual assessments in English language arts and math (in each of grades 3–8, plus one grade in high school).
- Another “valid and reliable statewide academic indicator” for elementary and middle schools, which can be a measure of student growth.
- The four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate for high schools (states may add an extended year adjusted cohort graduation rate if they choose).
- A measure of progress in English language proficiency for English language learners (in each of grades 3–8, plus one grade in high school).
- At least one measure of school quality or student success that is valid, reliable, and comparable across the state and allows for meaningful differentiation in school performance. These measures may include student engagement, student access to advanced coursework, postsecondary readiness, school climate and safety, or other measures.

The state must annually measure and report these data for all students and, separately, for each identified group of students. However, the law does not limit the number or kinds of indicators, and allows local districts to add indicators for their own purposes that are distinct from the state accountability system. The IEA has identified the following key indicators for your consideration.

Key Indicators

- **Student Growth.** Instead of solely relying on unrealistic attainment scores, the state might include an indicator that measures student learning over time or student growth. This growth indicator would provide evidence of the incremental progress occurring in our schools and districts which would be a more realistic and useful indicator of student success.
- **Access to Resources.** A reciprocal accountability system that holds schools accountable for student learning while simultaneously holding the state and district accountable for providing sufficient resources to support student learning is paramount. Indicators of access to resources include adequate funding, staffing, and facilities; up-to-date, standards-based materials and technology; and qualified and experienced teachers can help identify schools in need of support as well as inequities in resource distribution across schools.
- **Attendance and Chronic Absenteeism.** The number of days that students attend school is positively associated with student achievement, affecting their grades and achievement on reading and math assessments as well as on-time graduation. Including attendance as an accountability indicator motivates districts to quickly respond when student attendance stagnates or declines, overall or for specific groups.

In addition, chronic absenteeism, commonly measured as missing 10% or more of the school year, is associated with lower academic performance, lower likelihood for graduation, and increased achievement gaps across elementary, middle, and high school. Including chronic absenteeism as an indicator can help to identify and provide targeted support to schools that need to develop strategies to better address the needs of chronically absent students.

- **Student Suspension and Expulsion.** Evidence shows that removing students from school increases their likelihood of dropping out. Illinois has committed to reducing students' out-of-class time due to suspensions and expulsions, with particular attention given to the disproportionate rates of suspension experienced by students of color. Adopting this indicator would result in not only a drop in student suspension and expulsion rates but an adoption of restorative justice programs and other alternatives to suspension.

Next Steps

1. Identify a listening tour date and location that might be most convenient for you and your colleagues to attend.
www.isbe.net/essa
2. Reflect on the information provided in this document and your experiences with the current Illinois accountability system, and write down your ideas for indicators that you think would have the greatest influence on student success in Illinois.
3. Share your ideas publicly at the listening tour or email them to the ISBE (essa@isbe.net) by **September 30, 2016**.

In addition, the IEA encourages all members to share their ideas on any topic concerning ESSA with ISBE that may be important to you and your colleagues.

More information about ESSA may be found at www.nea.org/ESSAbegins.