



A Union of Professionals

How Will the New ESEA/ESSA Affect Schools in Your State?

The reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act, formerly known as No Child Left Behind and now officially known as the Every Student Succeeds Act, is a long overdue reset of the federal role in education policy.

Back in January, our union laid out four very clear goals for the reauthorization of ESEA:

- Maintain the fiscal equity provisions of the original ESEA.
- Get the federal government out of the business of teacher evaluation.
- Ensure that paraprofessional requirements remain intact.
- End the test-and-punish accountability system, creating instead one that will be more aligned with student learning and needs, and will give schools and educators the latitude to teach rather than simply require them to test.

The final version of ESEA meets these goals and paves the way for a public education system that's much more focused on teaching and learning, and that gives states and educators more latitude while maintaining federal funds for the students who need it most. While not perfect, there is a lot to like in this overhaul. The ESSA bill:

- Protects ESEA's original intent of mitigating poverty and targeting resources to students in need, and it adds an early childhood investment.
- Prohibits the federal government from mandating or prescribing the terms of teacher evaluation. The receipt of federal funds can no longer be conditioned on using test scores in teacher evaluation.
- Maintains paraprofessional certification requirements.
- Resets testing and accountability by improving tests and creating an accountability system that is less test-based, allowing joy to return to teaching and learning.

This is an opportunity for states to reshape their education systems. It will not happen overnight, but **without federal prescriptions on exactly what accountability, interventions for struggling schools, and teacher evaluation must look like, there is a path forward for states to reset these systems.**

- The state will be in control of its teacher evaluation system. Federal funds will not be tied to federal teacher evaluation requirements.
- Within parameters, the state will set its own accountability system that does not have to follow a rigid "adequate yearly progress" construct. States will still have to disaggregate results by subgroup.
- The accountability systems can include non-test measures like working conditions, school climate and safety, and educator engagement.

The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of 1.6 million professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

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- English language learners can have up to three years to take the language arts assessments in their native language before taking such tests in English. States can appropriately delay inclusion of English learners' test scores in accountability systems while they are first learning English, and can include former English learners for four years as part of English learner subgroup.
- The state will set its own interventions for struggling schools. The federal government won't specify sanctions (school closings, teacher firings, forced transfers, etc.) in return for money.
- The state will set its own content standards and aligned assessments, and the federal government cannot require the Common Core, or PARCC or Smarter Balanced tests.
- Several states will be allowed to develop and implement of a performance assessment system, such as the New York Performance Standards Consortium has done.
- States will be provided funds to audit their testing policies to decrease unnecessary tests.
- Collective bargaining protections are expanded to include both school improvement initiatives and teacher quality provisions.
- Class-size reduction remains an allowable use of funds, and community schools receive their own funding.