



# The Every Student Succeeds Act:

WHAT REPORTERS NEED TO KNOW



# Five Big Things to Know About ESSA

- ▶ Flexibility for states and districts is the new watchword
- ▶ There's lots of language restricting the U.S. Secretary of Education. That could make the new law more difficult to regulate on and enforce.
- ▶ There are “guardrails” in place that call for states and districts to look out for struggling schools and traditionally overlooked groups of students (aka “subgroups” of kids: English-language learners, students in special education, poor students, and racial minorities).
- ▶ Many smaller programs have been combined into a big giant block grant. And there is additional flexibility for districts in using federal funds.
- ▶ Waivers are null and void August 1, 2016. ESSA plans fully in place in the 2017-18 school year. The next year and a half is a transitional time.



# How Does Accountability Work Under ESSA?

- ▶ Just like under NCLB, states will have to test students in reading and math in grades three through eight and once in high school. But states will have more leeway over how much those tests count towards a school's rating.
- ▶ States will have to include at least one factor that gets at school quality (like school climate, access to advanced coursework or "grit.") These will have to be broken out by subgroup, as test scores are under NCLB.
- ▶ Instead of one big goal that's the same for everyone, states will decide what student achievement goal to shoot for. (Do they want to cut the achievement gap by a certain amount by a certain date? Improve every students' performance by a certain amount?)
- ▶ Teacher Evaluation process is totally up to the state/districts
- ▶ States can go their own way on standards.



# How Does School Improvement Work?

- ▶ States and districts have to intervene in the bottom five percent of schools (as under NCLB waivers), plus high schools where one third of kids don't graduate.
- ▶ States and districts get to decide what these interventions look like, but they have to be “evidence based.”
- ▶ States and districts need to flag schools where subgroups of students are consistently struggling. Schools need to come up with an evidence-based plan to fix the problem. Districts need to monitor their efforts. If the subgroup (or subgroups) continues to struggle for a long time, and has really low-performance, the state steps in.



# How does funding work?

- ▶ Almost 50 programs have been combined into a big, giant block grant, including Advanced Placement, education technology, and elementary and secondary counseling.
- ▶ For districts that get \$30,000 or more, there are rules for using this money. Twenty percent of the money has to be spent on at least one activity that helps students become well-rounded, and another 20 percent on at least one activity that helps kids be safe and healthy. And part of the money could be spent on technology. (No more than 15 percent.)
- ▶ More flexibility for states and districts when it comes to Title I rules for how federal funding can replace local and state dollars.
- ▶ States can set aside 3 percent of their Title I money for “direct student services” including credit recovery, tutoring, transportation for kids doing school choice



# Other Highlights

- ▶ Tests: Districts can use a nationally recognized college entrance exam (i.e. SAT, ACT) for high school accountability with state permission. A handful of states can apply to try out “innovative assessments (like New Hampshire is doing with performance based tests.)
- ▶ Early childhood education: The law enshrines “pre-school development grants”, a program to help states expand and enhance early childhood education programs.
- ▶ The law includes a continuation of two Obama administration initiatives: Promise Neighborhoods and a successor to Investing in Innovation.
- ▶ States can not allow Title I money to follow kids to the school of their choice.