

ESSA Implementation Guide

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) replaces the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), and shifts greater authority for academic standards, school accountability, and education policy back to states and districts. Local affiliates are the catalyst to lead and engage members in the ESSA implementation process. ESSA requires school districts to give teachers and education support professionals (ESPs) a seat at the table as the district works to develop their local plans.

All districts are required to submit local plans that include, for example, descriptions of how it will meet responsibilities related to school improvement and student achievement, support efforts to reduce the overuse of discipline practices that remove students from the classroom, and ensure that the district is following all federal laws. **Local plans are due to the state by June 2017.** Association staff may help their members by supporting the following next steps.

1. **Inform and Engage.** Inform your members about the opportunities and challenges provided by ESSA for their students and solicit their ideas (see www.getessaright.org and www.nea.org/ESSAbegins for more information).

2. **Identify Your Team.** Identify members who are interested in serving as leaders at the district level. This team should include a diverse group of educators that represent all members including ESPs. You are in control of who sits at the table for your local.

3. **Claim Your Space.** ESSA requires that teachers and ESPs, as well as their union, are involved in the development of local ESSA implementation plans. Approach the district to inquire about their plans for an ESSA Implementation Team. Adapt the attached letter and send it to your school board and school administrators.

4. **Affect District Plans.** Work with your members to curate school-level input and develop district-wide priorities and solutions for students. Work with your team to ensure their readiness to represent identified priorities and solutions as members of the district ESSA implementation team that will work to develop and submit a plan to the state.

A great place to start is to utilize the Great Public Schools (GPS) Indicator Framework (www.nea.org/gpsindicators) and the Student Assessment Inventory for School Districts (www.achieve.org/assessmentinventory) to identify priorities and solutions.

5. **Secure the Right to Collaborate:** ESSA expands collective bargaining opportunities that now include Title II funds that deal with preparing, training, and recruiting teachers and ESPs. This is a great opportunity to include contract language or develop memorandum of understanding that require teachers and ESPs to be actively involved in the development and selection of future training and professional development opportunities.

Example District Letter

[Insert Date]

Dear Superintendent and School Board:

Initial planning for implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2017-2018 has begun, and the **[Insert Name of Local]** is committed to collaboratively developing the best plan possible for our local district. ESSA shifts greater authority back to the state and local districts, creating a more balanced role for the federal government and local stakeholders in education policy.

ESSA requires timely and meaningful consultation with teachers and paraprofessionals as both the state and local districts develop their implementation plans. For example, the law states that local education agencies will meaningfully consult with teachers and paraprofessionals concerning the application for subgrants under Title I which includes developing and implementing a well-rounded program of instruction to meet the academic needs of all students.

Applications for subgrants under Title II also require meaningful consultation with teachers and paraprofessionals concerning the improvement of teacher evaluation and support systems; the development of initiatives to assist in recruiting, hiring, and retaining effective teachers and paraprofessionals; and providing high-quality professional development among other initiatives. Finally, similar requirements are included under Title III and Title IV. Additionally, Title IV requires continuing consultation with teachers to ensure implementation of the district's plan and coordination with related strategies, programs, and activities being conducted in the local community.

We are excited about the opportunities ESSA holds for our local schools and would like to request an ESSA implementation meeting with the district. We look forward to our collaborative work developing and implementing our local plan.

Sincerely,

[Insert Name of Local President]

[Local Association]