



State Board of Education

Marva Johnson, *Chair*
John R. Padget, *Vice Chair*
Members
Gary Chartrand
Tom Grady
Rebecca Fishman Lipsey
Michael Olenick
Andy Tuck

Pam Stewart
Commissioner of Education

MEMORANDUM

TO: School District Superintendents

FROM: Hershel Lyons

DATE: June 3, 2016

SUBJECT: Every Student Succeeds Act Update and Public Input Plan

Contact Information

ESSA@fldoe.org

DPS: 2016-87

Please find below the talking points used recently by Florida Department of Education (FDOE) personnel regarding the implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in Florida. You may use these with your local constituency groups. For district planning purposes, you may also find helpful the information regarding public input and the timeline based on the information we have received from the U.S Department of Education (USED).

General ESSA Talking Points

- It is vital for us to spend time discussing recent state and federal legislation in order to keep our stakeholders informed and our districts prepared for any policy changes.
- At FDOE, one of the first things we ask ourselves when it comes to decision-making is “will this help ensure that all students are learning?”
- As we look to the future and plan for implementation of ESSA, that question will remain in the forefront of conversations.
- We are still waiting on additional guidance from USED, but we do know that ESSA emphasizes accountability, particularly for low-performing schools with consistently low graduation rates and slow progression.
- Here in Florida, these are familiar concepts. We established K-12 accountability before No Child Left Behind, and we have continued to raise standards and academic achievement in recent years to ensure success in college, career and life for all students.
- As a result, Florida’s students are leading the way in critical education metrics, and we now serve as a national education model. This is particularly impressive considering the fact that we consistently raised the bar to ensure students are prepared to succeed in higher education and compete in the global job market.
 - Florida’s graduation rate is at a 12-year high, and all demographic subgroups have increased, contributing greatly to the statewide improvement.
 - Florida ranks 2nd in the nation for participation in AP courses, and 3rd in the nation in the percentage of 2015 graduates who succeeded on AP exams, with 30 percent of these graduates eligible for college credit.
 - Recent NAEP results show that Florida’s fourth grade Hispanic students continue to have the nation’s highest percentage of students performing at or above *Basic* and at or above *Proficient* in reading.
 - Florida has the 2nd lowest grade 4 reading poverty gap and ranks 4th for improvement in reading in K-12 achievement.

HERSHEL LYONS
CHANCELLOR OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS

- Florida's high school graduation rates for students with disabilities has improved 18 percentage points in the past eight years, from 39 percent in 2006-07 to 57 percent in 2014-15.
- In Florida, the vast majority of students with disabilities are meeting the same general education standards as their peers without disabilities.
- And we have made great strides in closing the achievement gap:
 - At 68 percent, the high school graduation rate for Florida's African American students has increased 22.3 percentage points since 2003-04 and 3.3 percent over last year.
 - Florida has the greatest number of AP scores of 3 or higher received by African American students in the nation.
 - Florida's ranks 1st in the nation for narrowing the achievement gap between White and African American students from 2003 to 2015 on grade 8 NAEP Reading, closing the achievement gap by 8.69 scale score points during that time.
- ESSA provides more flexibility than ESEA, but the degree of flexibility is not yet completely outlined.
 - Additionally, with flexibility also comes additional responsibility. Rather than rely on federal requirements, we will need to be fully invested in any flexibility options we choose, because we take responsibility as a state for every child's education.
 - When considering flexibility options, we must consider the evidence that leads us to believe we can still know whether every child is being educated to their highest potential.
- We are learning together and caution districts in moving too fast on items that will need to be finalized at the federal level before we know the parameters of ESSA flexibility and can pursue decisions at the state level, with your input.

Public Input

There is a lot of guidance we await as a state, and subsequently, many decisions that need to be made. We hope that you will communicate with us throughout this process and encourage other interested individuals to share their opinions and ideas as well. Your expertise and input are a valued and necessary part of this ongoing conversation.

- This month, FDOE will begin taking online public comment on what should be included in Florida's state plan, based on ESSA requirements.
- Once the comment period has ended, we will review the feedback we received and develop a draft state plan, which will be posted online.
- FDOE will again request input from education stakeholders after Florida's ESSA draft state plan is posted online. This public comment period will last at least 30 days, and it will take place prior to its due date to USED.
- Depending on the feedback we receive and the content of the state plan, we will determine whether changes are necessary to State Board of Education rule or will require legislative action.

Timeline

We await guidance from USED on the following question which affects our timeline for preparing a state plan and making decisions on accountability changes, and has ripple effects to school improvement policy and possible state statutory changes: Does accountability implementation in 2017-2018 mean that decisions are based on 2016-2017 results or 2017-2018 results?

This is an important time in our state's education system, and we appreciate your patience and input as we move through the various steps and processes to fully implement ESSA. Below, we have provided a timeline based on the information we have currently. Given the evolving nature of this process, we expect to revise this timeline based on changes that take place at the federal level. We will continue to update you as more information becomes available.

- **April 2016:** The negotiated rulemaking meetings finished in April, but there was not necessarily agreement on a clear path forward.
- **May 31, 2016:** USED published draft regulations on accountability, state plans and data reporting to the Federal Register.
- **June 20, 2016:** FDOE will begin taking public comment online to receive input on what Florida's state plan should include, based on ESSA.
- **September 2016:** The State Board of Education will adopt the legislative platform, which will include any statutory changes needed to comply with ESSA.
- **By the end of 2016:** FDOE expects to receive final regulations from USED.
- At a date yet to be determined, Florida's ESSA state plan will be posted for public comment for at least 30 days, prior to its due date to USED.
- **Early 2017:** ESSA offers an opportunity for FDOE to consolidate federal programs funding applications. We anticipate providing training on a new application.
- **Spring 2017:** During the 2017 Legislative Session, any necessary legislative changes will be pursued.
- **Summer or Fall of 2017:** If necessary based on any legislative changes, the State Board of Education rulemaking process will commence.

As a reminder, FDOE will post information on ESSA as it becomes available at www.fldoe.org/academics/essa.stml. There is a place to sign up to get email updates when new information is available. Questions about ESSA can be sent to ESSA@fldoe.org.

We look forward to learning together with our partners at the local and federal levels as we make decisions about and plan implementation of the opportunities afforded by ESSA.

HL/he

cc: School District Deputy Superintendents
School District Assistant Superintendents
School District Accountability Directors
School District Assessment Directors
School District Curriculum Directors
School District Federal Programs Directors