



New Opportunities to Advance Personalized Learning
in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Assessment

Design of Assessment

NCLB

Each state must implement a set of high-quality, yearly student academic assessments in math, reading or language arts, and science.

Assessments must be administered annually in grades 3–8 and once in grades 10–12. Science must be assessed once in each of the following grade spans: 3–5, 6–9, and 10–12.

Obama Administration's NCLB Waiver Package

Each state must implement a set of high-quality, yearly student academic assessments in math, reading/English language arts, and science. Assessment timelines from current law are maintained.

ESSA

Each state must implement a set of high-quality student academic assessments in math, reading or language arts, and science. The assessment timelines from NCLB are maintained. However, states can now design student-centered assessment systems by incorporating the following elements:

- State systems can measure achievement through multiple statewide interim assessments that, when combined, produce an annual summative score.
- Assessments may measure individual student growth.
- Assessments must involve multiple up-to-date measures of student academic achievement, which may include measures of student growth and may be partially delivered through portfolios, projects, or extended performance tasks.
- States may use computer-adaptive assessments to measure a student's academic proficiency above or below grade level to determine a student's actual performance level.

Opportunity to Advance Personalized Learning

States have an opportunity to replace or enhance current assessments with better assessment systems that measure complex demonstrations of mastery, integrate multiple points of learning evidence, and provide an accurate picture of each student's learning trajectory so stakeholders can respond with customized supports and interventions.

Assessment

Funding for Assessment



NCLB

The law authorizes grants to states for the development of the annual assessments for reading or language arts and math; and for enhanced assessment activities, such as those funding the development of the Common Core Assessments, English language proficiency assessments, pre-K assessments, and greater accessibility on assessments for students with disabilities.

Obama Administration's NCLB Waiver Package

No applicability.

ESSA

The law maintains grants to states for the development of assessments with some new allowable uses of funds including:

- Developing or improving balanced assessment systems that include summative, interim, and formative assessments, including supporting local educational agencies in developing or improving such assessments.
- Developing or improving models to measure and assess student progress or student growth on state assessments.
- Measuring student achievement using multiple measures from multiple sources.
- Developing comprehensive assessment instruments such as performance and technology-based assessments, computer adaptive assessments, projects, or extended performance tasks that emphasize the mastery of standards and aligned competencies in a competency-based education model.

Opportunity to Advance Personalized Learning

States may use their federal assessment grant to design and build assessment systems that better align to personalized learning strategies. These funds can help states offset the costs of enhancements including the integration of performance elements and assessment tasks that measure mastery of social and emotional competencies.

Assessment

Innovative Assessment Pilot



NCLB

No applicability.

Obama Administration's NCLB Waiver Package

No applicability.

ESSA

The law establishes a pilot program in which up to seven states initially may design, build, and implement innovative, competency-based systems of assessments that drive continuous improvement of learning. A state may use these assessments to meet federal accountability requirements. A state may pilot its new assessment system in a group of districts but must take the system statewide by the end of the demonstration period. Assessments must demonstrate high technical quality including comparability to the Title I required statewide assessments.

Opportunity to Advance Personalized Learning

This demonstration program provides interested states with a unique opportunity to pilot high quality, rigorous assessments that validate mastery of academic knowledge and core competencies through more complex performance based tasks. These assessments will provide a data-rich picture of each student's performance level—not just those that meet or exceed proficiency—to ensure continuous improvement of learning.

State Accountability System



NCLB

Each state is required to have a definition of adequate yearly progress (AYP) in place that sets annual measurable objectives (AMOs) for subgroups in all schools to meet 100% proficiency on state assessments by the 2013–2014 school year.

In addition, secondary schools are required to include graduation rates, and elementary schools are required to use an academic indicator in addition to the assessments results described above in their definitions of AYP.

Obama Administration's NCLB Waiver Package

States are required to pick one of three AYP options:

1. Half to 100% in six years—States would have to set new AMOs by subgroup that would cut the gap in half between where scores are now (2010–2011 assessment results) and 100% in six years.
2. 100% proficiency by 2020—States would be required to set new AMOs to get all students to 100% proficiency by 2020. They would use 2010–2011 school year performance as the starting point.
3. State-developed option—States could develop their own AMOs on a different timeline than the previous two proposals. These AMOs would have to be ambitious but achievable.

ESSA

The law provides states with significant flexibility to design accountability systems that align to their vision of college and career success. The new federal requirements are as follows:

1. States must establish “ambitious state-designed long term goals” with measurements of interim progress for all students and subgroups of students on:
 - Improved academic achievement on state assessments
 - Graduation rates
 - Progress in achieving English language proficiency for English learners (EL)
2. State systems must include the following indicators (measured for all students and sub-groups, except for the EL proficiency indicator):
 - Academic Indicators:
 - Academic achievement based on the annual assessments and on the state’s goals
 - A measure of student growth or other statewide academic indicator for elementary and middle schools
 - Graduation rates for high schools based on the state’s goals
 - Progress in achieving English proficiency for ELs in each of grades 3 through 8 and the same high school grade in which the state assesses for Math and English language arts.

Opportunity to Advance Personalized Learning

States may integrate personalized learning indicators into their accountability system and assign substantial weight to those measures to ensure all students master the knowledge, skills, and competencies to succeed in college and career. States may also emphasize growth to proficiency in their accountability system to incentivize success for every student—not just those most likely to meet or exceed grade level proficiency.

- Measure of School Quality and Student Success
 - At least one measure of school quality or student success (such as student and educator engagement, access and completion of advanced coursework, postsecondary readiness, school climate, and safety).
- 3. States are required to “meaningfully differentiate” all public schools annually according to school and subgroup performance on the indicators above.

States must give the Academic Indicators “substantial weight,” and these 4 indicators must, in the aggregate, be given “much greater weight” in the differentiation process than any Measures of School Quality or Student Success.

School Improvement



NCLB

Each Local Education Agency (LEA) must identify schools that do not make AYP for a certain number of years for school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring. Schools are identified for school improvement after missing AYP for two years; for corrective action after missing AYP for four years; and for restructuring after missing AYP for five years.

Obama Administration's NCLB Waiver Package

States are required to identify two main categories of schools: (1) focus schools; and (2) priority schools. States under the waivers may identify reward schools.

Priority Schools are the bottom 5% of schools in the state. For these schools, states would have to implement one of the four school turnaround models OR design a model based on a set of school turnaround principles.

Focus Schools are the 10% of the schools in the state with the worst achievement gaps. Although schools are identified, there is not a federally defined set of interventions that would apply to these schools.

Reward Schools are the top performing schools in the state. Among other approaches, such schools may receive visits from state officials, be honored, or receive monetary awards.

ESSA

The law includes the following requirements for school improvement:

- States must establish two categories of schools for intervention:
1. Comprehensive Support and Improvement
 2. Targeted Support and Improvement

Identification for Comprehensive Support and Improvement—Beginning with school year 2017–2018 and at least once every 3 years, states must identify schools for “comprehensive support and improvement.” States are also required to set exit criteria to signify when a school no longer requires identification.

Comprehensive support and improvement schools must include:

- The 5% lowest performing in the state,
- High schools that graduate less than two-thirds of their students,
- Schools for which a subgroup is consistently underperforming in the same manner as a school under the lowest 5% category for a state-determined number of years.

Local Education Agencies (LEAs) must develop comprehensive support and improvement plans for schools identified. Plans must include evidence-based interventions; be based on a school-level needs assessment; identify resource inequities; be approved by the school, LEA, and State Educational Agency (SEA); and be periodically monitored and reviewed by the SEA.

Opportunity to Advance Personalized Learning

States have an opportunity to build a robust system of supports and interventions that incorporates personalized learning strategies to ensure all students are able to reach mastery with targeted support to remain on track to graduation. The system should provide schools with real-time data and diagnostic support to make necessary improvements throughout the school year instead of waiting for challenges to escalate.

After a state-determined period of years (not to exceed 4 years) states must take more rigorous state-determined action if a school identified for comprehensive support and intervention has not met the exit criteria decided upon by the state.

Notification of Targeted Support and Improvement—The State must also annually notify LEAs that have schools with “consistently underperforming” subgroups. These schools must develop and implement a “targeted support and improvement plan” using evidence-based interventions. This plan must be approved and monitored by the LEA. If the plan is not successfully implemented after an LEA-determined number of years, additional action must take place. Schools where subgroup performance, on its own, would result in the 5% lowest performing in the state must also identify resource inequities. Notification for target support and improvement will begin with the 2017–2018 academic year.

School Improvement Strategies

NCLB

Under Restructuring, LEAs are required to adopt one of five alternative governance arrangements for such schools:

1. Reopening the school as a charter school;
2. Replacing all or most of the school staff relevant to the failure to make AYP;
3. Operating the school under a private management company;
4. State takeover; or
5. Other major restructuring of the school's governance arrangement.

Under the regulations for the School Improvement Grant (SIG) program, schools identified for assistance must implement one of four turnaround models: the Turnaround Model, the Restart Model, School Closure, or the Transformation Model.

ESSA

The law does not prescribe specific school improvement strategies.

Opportunity to Advance Personalized Learning

States have significant flexibility in how they differentiate schools for improvement and identify appropriate supports and interventions. States should take advantage of this flexibility to develop processes for helping underperforming schools implement personalized learning strategies that lead to continuous growth and school improvement.

Obama Administration's NCLB Waiver Package

Priority schools are required to implement one of the four school intervention models under the School Improvement Grant program or a state-designed intervention model based on a federally-defined set of turnaround principles.

Direct Student Services



NCLB

No applicability.

Obama Administration's NCLB Waiver Package

No applicability.

ESSA

The law creates a new "direct student services" provision. Under this provision, states may reserve up to 3% of their Title I, Part A grant to distribute grants to LEAs for direct student services. Priority must go to LEAs serving the highest percentage of schools identified for Comprehensive Support and Improvement, and Targeted Support and Improvement.

Direct student services must include one of the following:

- Enrollment and participation in academic courses not otherwise available at a student's school;
- Credit recovery and academic acceleration courses that lead to a regular high school diploma;
- Activities that assist students in successfully completing postsecondary credit (including Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses), which may include reimbursing low-income students to cover part or all of the costs of fees for such examinations;
- Components of a personalized learning approach, which may include high-quality academic tutoring; or
- Transportation to allow a student enrolled in a school identified for Comprehensive Support and Improvement to transfer to another, higher performing public school, if an LEA does not reserve funds as part of its school improvement and support activities.

Opportunity to Advance Personalized Learning

States should explore high-quality strategies for leveraging the direct student services provision to provide students in underperforming schools with access to personalized learning opportunities. Strategies should enable students to pursue a personalized learning pathway with access to high-quality credit-bearing opportunities that will prepare them for success in college and career.

State Set-Aside for School Improvement

NCLB

States must reserve 4% of their Title I, Part A grant, of which 95% must be allocated to LEAs to assist schools identified for school improvement.

Obama Administration's NCLB Waiver Package

No applicability.

ESSA

The law increases the set-aside from 4% to 7% for states to carry out a statewide system of technical assistance and support for LEAs but eliminates the authorization from NCLB for the School Improvement Grant (SIG) program.

Opportunity to Advance Personalized Learning

While this authorization change is not likely to impact state resources for school improvement activities, states should revisit their school improvement policies and technical assistance offerings to ensure that state activities support schools in the adoption of personalized learning strategies.

Teacher Certification and Licensure



NCLB

The law requires states to:

1. measure the extent to which all students have highly qualified teachers, particularly minority and disadvantaged students;
2. adopt goals and plans to ensure all teachers are highly qualified;
3. publicly report plans and progress in meeting teacher quality goals.

To be deemed highly qualified, teachers must have:

1. a bachelor's degree
2. full state certification or licensure; and
3. proof that they know each subject they teach.

ESSA

The law replaces the "highly qualified teacher" requirements with a requirement that states ensure teachers meet the applicable state certification and licensure requirements.

Opportunity to Advance Personalized Learning

The law provides states with an opportunity to design a new strategy for educator quality that aligns to a vision for personalized learning. Specifically, states could align their certification and licensing requirements to reflect new teaching roles and competencies for instruction in personalized learning environments.

Obama Administration's NCLB Waiver Package

States could seek a waiver from the highly qualified teacher requirements as long as the SEA and each LEA commit to develop, adopt, pilot, and implement teacher and principal evaluation and support systems.

Principals or Other School Leaders



NCLB

No applicability.

Obama Administration's NCLB Waiver Package

No applicability.

ESSA

The law allows a state to reserve up to 3% of its Title II, Part A allocation to provide support for principals and other school leaders, including activities such as:

- Reforming certification, recertification, licensing, or tenure systems;
- Supporting the design and implementation of evaluation systems;
- Supporting alternative routes for state certification;
- Developing high quality professional development programs.

Opportunity to Advance Personalized Learning

States may take advantage of the opportunity to reserve 3% of their Title II, Part A funds to build a workforce of leaders with the skills to help schools transition to personalized learning environments.

Title IV — 21st Century Schools

(Part A): Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants



NCLB

The law provides separate funding streams for the Safe and Drug Free Schools and the Enhancing Education through Technology Programs.

Obama Administration's NCLB Waiver Package

No applicability.

ESSA

The law consolidates a number of existing federal grant programs into a new state block grant that states may use to:

- Provide all students with access to a well-rounded education;
- Improve school conditions for student learning; and
- Improve the use of technology in order to improve the academic achievement and digital literacy of all students.

States will distribute 95% of their allotment in the form of grants to LEAs.

Opportunity to Advance Personalized Learning

States can leverage these resources to encourage innovation and personalized learning activities across the state, especially activities that help educators design customized learning pathways for students focused on mastery of academic content knowledge and social and emotional competencies.

Title IV — 21st Century Schools

(Part B): 21st Century Community Learning Centers



NCLB

The law provides grants to states to fund community learning centers that provide academic enrichment activities during non-school hours to help students meet state academic standards.

ESSA

The law maintains grants to states to fund community learning centers that provide academic enrichment activities during non-school hours but expands the scope to include extended day programs that help students meet challenging state academic standards.

Opportunity to Advance Personalized Learning

States can leverage these federal resources to support partnerships with community organizations in the provision of personalized learning opportunities, including those that provide students with academic credit.

Obama Administration's NCLB Waiver Package

No applicability.

Title IV — 21st Century Schools

(Part F Subpart 1): Education Innovation and Research



NCLB

No applicability.

Obama Administration's NCLB Waiver Package

No applicability.

ESSA

The law establishes a new program in which the Secretary can award grants to entities to create, develop, implement, replicate, or take to scale entrepreneurial, evidence-based, field-initiated innovations to improve student achievement and attainment for high-need students and to rigorously evaluate those innovations.

Opportunity to Advance Personalized Learning

This new program provides education stakeholders with an opportunity to identify and scale high quality, evidence-based, personalized learning programs and strategies.

Title IV — 21st Century Schools (Part F Subpart 2): Community Support for School Success



NCLB

No applicability.

Obama Administration's NCLB Waiver Package

No applicability.

ESSA

The law establishes a new program in which the Secretary can award grants to entities to create, develop, implement, replicate, or take to scale entrepreneurial, evidence-based, field-initiated innovations to improve student achievement and attainment for high-need students and to rigorously evaluate those innovations.

Opportunity to Advance Personalized Learning

This new program provides education stakeholders with an opportunity to identify and scale high quality, evidence-based, personalized learning programs and strategies.

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KnowledgeWorks.org



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