



StraightA's

Public Education Policy And Progress



ESSA IMPLEMENTATION: Education Department Provides More Details on Accountability, Data Reporting, and State Plan Provisions

In order to “provide clarity” to states, school districts, and schools as they implement the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which replaced the No Child Left Behind Act, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) released proposed regulations on May 26 regarding ESSA’s provisions on accountability, data reporting, and state plans.

Overall, the proposed regulations clarify several provisions in ESSA, including (1) how to calculate and assign an overall rating to measure the quality of learning within individual schools; (2) how to report on and hold schools accountable for the academic performance of student subgroups (African American students, students from low-income families, English language learners, etc.); and (3) when states must intervene and provide support to low-performing schools, including schools in the bottom 5 percent of all schools and high schools where one-third or more of students fail to graduate. (For more information on the proposed regulations, watch the May 31 episode of Federal Flash, the Alliance’s five-minute (or less) video series key happenings on federal education policy.)



The proposed regulations were immediately met with skepticism from key Republicans in the U.S. Congress who have cautioned ED to stay true to the flexibility that the law grants to states and school districts, but they were welcomed by Democrats who believe that ED must continue to play a watchdog role regarding education opportunities for traditionally underserved students.

In a [statement announcing the regulations](#), U.S. Secretary of Education John B. King Jr. sought ground in the middle. “These regulations give states the opportunity to work with all of their stakeholders, including parents, and educators to protect all students’ right to a high-quality education that prepares them for college and careers, including the most vulnerable students,” King said. “They also give educators room to reclaim for all of their students the joy and promise of a well-rounded educational experience.”

U.S. Representative Robert C. “Bobby” Scott (D-VA), the highest-ranking Democrat on the House Education and the Workforce Committee, [agreed with King](#), noting that the proposed regulations “provide much-needed flexibility to states and school districts, while maintaining a

strong focus on improving educational opportunity and academic achievement for our nation's most vulnerable students.” Scott added that the proposed regulations “fulfill the federal obligation to protect and promote equity, ensuring that ESSA implementation will uphold the civil rights legacy of the law.”

U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-TN) disagreed, noting that the proposed regulations “[seem] to include provisions that the Congress considered—and expressly rejected.” He was joined by **House Education and the Workforce Committee Chairman John Kline (R-MN)** who said he would “use every available tool” to ensure that ESSA was implemented as Congress intended.

As is typically the case, the question of congressional intent—even for a bill only a few months old—is often not as black or white as the letters on a page, something to which **U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA)** alluded during an [April hearing on ESSA implementation](#).

“When the federal government gives the state billions of taxpayer dollars to improve education for our most vulnerable kids then it’s critical that the Department of Education ensure that those states actually use the money to accomplish those ends,” Warren said. “This is one of the conditions on which a lot of senators voted for this law, the condition on which many House Democrats voted for this law, and the condition on which the president of the United States signed this bill into law.”

Looking ahead, ED’s proposed regulations will be entered into the Federal Register and the public will have 60 days, or until August 1, 2016, to offer comments on the draft regulations. The final regulations should be released in the fall. Additionally, ED still needs to release proposed regulations for assessments and a provision called “supplement, not supplant,” which has to do with how federal funding is allocated among individual school districts. These proposed regulations are expected to be released in July 2016.



EXAMINING STATES’ TEACHER EQUITY PLANS: States Report Large Gaps in Students’ Access to Effective Teaching

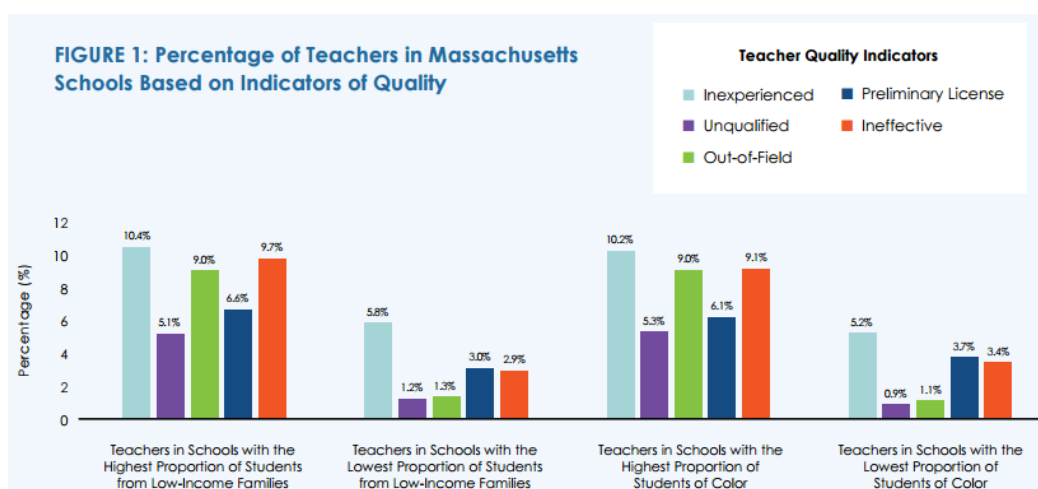
Schools serving students of color and students from low-income families have double the percentage of inexperienced and unqualified teachers—particularly at the secondary level—along with higher teacher and principal turnover, according to a new report from the Alliance for Excellent Education (the Alliance). The report, *One Year Later: Can State Equity Plans Improve Access to Great Teaching?*, is based on an analysis of the [teacher equity plans](#) that states submitted to the U.S. Department of Education (ED) last summer.

“Access to effective teaching is as important to student success as wheels to a bicycle,” said **Alliance President Gov. Bob Wise**. “That’s why it is so important that both the federal government and states have recognized the importance of identifying and closing these gaps in access through state equity plans. Before you can fix a problem, you must first identify it.”

To address the problem of inequitable access to effective teachers, ED asked each state to submit a plan by June 1, 2015, to ensure that students from low-income families and students of color

are not taught by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers at higher rates than other children. *One Year Later* provides an overview of the gaps states identified in students’ access to high-quality teaching, examines the root causes for these gaps, and highlights promising approaches for eliminating them.

Overall, state teacher equity plans show that a lack of access to great teaching is most acute in high-need districts and schools. In Massachusetts, for example, 34.2 percent of teachers in schools with the highest proportion of students from low-income families were considered inexperienced, unqualified, ineffective, or were teaching out of their field, compared to only 11.2 percent of teachers in schools with the lowest proportion of students from low-income families. A similar disparity exists between schools with the highest and lowest percentages of students of color, as shown in the graph from the report shown below.



To address these gaps, Massachusetts is implementing a series of steps, including aligning educator preparation programs with district needs; ensuring that teacher preparation programs include course work, field-based experiences with emphasis on teaching diverse learners, social-emotional development, and English language development; linking data from educator preparation programs to the academic growth of students in K–12 schools; and tracking individual student access to experienced, prepared, and effective teachers over a three- to five-year period.

Some states, such as Kentucky and Delaware, are working to ensure that educators have the competencies to work effectively in high-need schools. States such as Wisconsin are establishing standards regarding the knowledge and competencies teachers need to enter the profession. Other states are reorienting teacher preparation around supervised clinical preparation and strengthening partnerships with K–12 schools.

“Most states identify teacher preparation, as currently designed, as a major factor in limiting students’ access to skilled, experienced teachers,” said **Mariana Haynes, author of the report and senior fellow at the Alliance**. “Preparation programs continue to be lax in candidate selection and driven by what institutions of higher education want to offer—not by what schools

or teachers need. In response, states are moving to develop a teacher development system that is performance-based and anchored in professional teaching standards.”

The report also focuses on state efforts to increase teacher retention and effectiveness, noting that teacher turnover is the highest among beginning teachers. Currently, however, only four states (Delaware, Connecticut, Hawaii, and Iowa) are funding multiple-year induction programs to ensure that beginning teachers receive the support they need to succeed. Other states, such as Kentucky, included detailed mentoring and induction programs within their teacher equity plans, understanding the tremendous costs—both financially and in student achievement—associated with chronic teacher turnover. According to a [July 2014 study by the Alliance](#), these costs range from \$2 million a year in Delaware to \$235 million a year in Texas.

“The lack of access to effective teaching among students of color and students from low-income families cannot be a problem that the nation simply decides to live with—the impact on students and communities is too great,” said Wise.

Under the recently enacted Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which replaced the No Child Left Behind Act, states and school districts must publicly report annual data on students’ access to qualified, experienced educators and describe how they will identify and address gaps in access. ESSA also authorizes federal funding to support these efforts and prioritizes investments in programs based on evidence of program impact and cost effectiveness. (For more information on teacher and leader provisions under ESSA, visit <http://all4ed.org/essa/#Teachers>.)

In conjunction with the release of *One Year Later*, the Alliance held a webinar that featured Gov. Bob Wise; Mariana Haynes; **Ellen Moir and Liam Goldrick from the New Teacher Center**; and **Angela Iudica from Broward County Public Schools (Florida)**. Archived video from the webinar is available “on demand” at <http://all4ed.org/webinar-event/may-26-2016/>.

One Year Later: Can State Equity Plans Improve Access to Great Teaching? is available at <http://all4ed.org/reports-factsheets/teacherequityplans/>.



CRITICAL ROLES: Government Report Outlines Ways Departments of Education and Justice Can Monitor and Address Racial Discrimination in Schools

The percentage of K–12 public schools with high proportions of students from low-income families and black or Hispanic students grew from 9 percent in School Year (SY) 2000–01 to 16 percent in SY 2013–14, according to a new report from the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO). Released on the sixty-second anniversary of the *Brown vs. Board* Supreme Court decision declaring that racially segregated schools were inherently unequal, the report notes that these schools “offered disproportionately fewer math, science, and college preparatory courses and had disproportionately higher rates of students who were held back in ninth grade, suspended, expelled.”

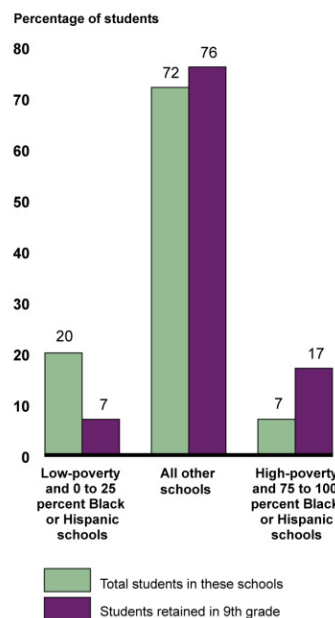
“Sixty-two years later, here we are in 2016 facing an overwhelming failure to fulfill the promise of *Brown* in realizing equality in educational opportunity for all students,” [said U.S. Representative Bobby Scott \(D-VA\)](#), who requested the report along with **U.S. Representative**

John Conyers (D-MI) and former U.S. Representative George Miller (D-CA). “The GAO report confirms that our nation’s schools are, in fact, largely segregated by race and class. What’s more troubling, is that segregation in public K–12 schools isn’t getting better; it’s getting worse, and getting worse quickly, with more than 20 million students of color now attending racially and socioeconomically isolated public schools. This report is a national call to action, and I intend to ensure Congress is part of the solution.”

According to the report, *Better Use of Information Could Help Agencies Identify Disparities and Address Racial Discrimination*, the percentage of students attending high-poverty schools of mostly black or Hispanic students has nearly doubled from 10 percent in SY 2000–01 to 17 percent in SY 2013–14. And even though students in those schools make up only 7 percent of all ninth-grade students, they represent 17 percent of the ninth graders who were held back, as shown in the graph to the right.

The report examines efforts underway in three school districts—one located each in the Northeast, South, and West—to correct these disparities, but it notes that they face a variety of challenges, including providing transportation to students and obtaining support from parents and the community.

Percentage of Students Retained in 9th Grade, School Year 2011-12



Both the U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) have “critical” roles to play in addressing these disparities, the report finds, noting that the agencies enforce federal laws protecting students from racial discrimination and ensure schools and districts provide all students with equitable access. At the same time, however, GAO identifies shortcomings with their work and recommends that they better leverage the data available to them to aid their guidance, enforcement, and oversight efforts.

“Education has ongoing efforts to collect data that it uses to identify potential discrimination and disparities across key groups of students, but it has not routinely analyzed its data in a way that may reveal larger patterns among different types and groups of schools, the report notes. “As a result, the agency may miss key patterns and trends among schools that could enhance its efforts.”

The report notes that DOJ is a party to 178 federal desegregation orders that remain open, but that it “does not track key summary information about the orders that would allow them to effectively monitor their status. Without systematically tracking such information, the agency may lack information that could help in its enforcement efforts.”

Better Use of Information Could Help Agencies Identify Disparities and Address Racial Discrimination is available at <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-345>.



HELD ACCOUNTABLE: Current State Accountability Systems Overlook Students' English Language Skills, Says New Report

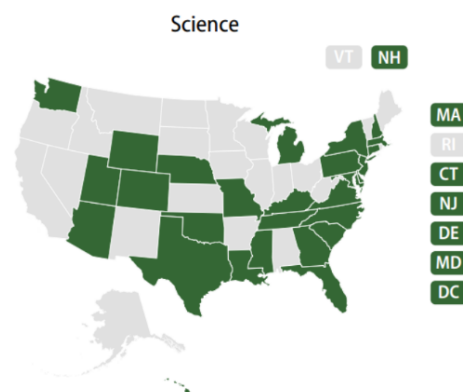
Most states will need to adjust their accountability systems to comply fully with new requirements under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), since the majority do not include an indicator that focuses specifically on English language learners' English language acquisition, a requirement under the new federal education law. That finding comes from *Making the Grade: A 50-State Analysis of School Accountability Systems*, a new report from the Center for American Progress (CAP).

“Under No Child Left Behind [NCLB], states were responsible for improving English learners’ language proficiency in addition to their academic achievement,” the report explains. “NCLB, however, treated language acquisition differently than subject area achievement, which required states to set up a separate accountability system that only applied to districts, not schools.”

As a result, only six states—Arizona, Colorado, Georgia, Illinois, Massachusetts, and Texas—currently include English language proficiency or growth in their statewide accountability systems, according to the CAP report. In addition to students’ English language acquisition, ESSA also requires states to hold schools accountable for student performance in English language arts (ELA) and math; a second academic indicator, such as student growth in ELA and math; high school graduation rates; and at least one measure of school quality or student success. Additionally, on all indicators (except English language acquisition) states must monitor the performance of individual student subgroups including racial/ethnic groups, students from low-income families, students with disabilities, and English language learners. States must implement their new accountability systems in School Year 2017–18.

The CAP report analyzes the current accountability systems in all fifty states and the District of Columbia to determine how those systems align with ESSA’s requirements. The report identifies sixty unique measures that states include in their accountability systems, which the authors group into seven categories:

1. achievement indicators
2. student growth indicators
3. English language acquisition indicators
4. persistence indicators
5. early-warning indicators
6. college- and career-ready indicators
7. other indicators unique to individual states



Every state accountability system includes achievement indicators that measure student academic performance in ELA and math—a requirement carried over from NCLB.

Twenty-nine states include student achievement indicators in science as well, as shown in the map above from the report. (The report includes similar maps that track whether state accountability systems measure student performance in writing or social studies. An [online interactive map](#) also is available to compare accountability indicators between states.)

Some states like West Virginia also hold schools accountable for reducing academic achievement gaps between certain groups of students, such as between affluent and poor students and between white students and students of color, the report says.

Additionally, every state accountability system includes at least one persistence indicator, such as a high school graduation or dropout rate. Forty-nine states and the District of Columbia include their four-year cohort high school graduation rate in their accountability systems, the report says. Washington is the only state that uses an extended-year cohort high school graduation rate instead of the four-year rate, the report notes. However, thirty-six state accountability systems include an extended-year cohort high school graduation rate in addition to the four-year rate.

States have not limited their accountability systems solely to academic indicators. Twenty-seven state accountability systems include other types of performance and quality indicators that are either unique to those states or outside the scope of the report's main categories. Accountability systems in states such as Georgia, Illinois, and New Mexico, for instance, include measures of [school climate](#). Meanwhile, Virginia's accountability system rewards schools for student participation in advanced science, technology, engineering, and math courses. Iowa's system factors staff retention into school accountability ratings.

“Under the Every Student Succeeds Act, states have additional flexibility when it comes to designing school accountability systems—but are still tasked with making sure that every student is ready for college and a career,” says **Carmel Martin, executive vice president for policy at CAP and coauthor of the report**, in a [statement](#). “This report will help states understand what kind of measures their colleagues across the country are using, but states should not be limited by current options. They have the opportunity to build upon and improve their current systems with indicators that more fully capture student achievement and overall school success.”

Making the Grade: A 50-State Analysis of School Accountability Systems is available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education/report/2016/05/19/137444/making-the-grade/>.

For additional information about ESSA's accountability provisions, read the Alliance for Excellent Education's [fact sheet](#), watch this special edition of [Federal Flash](#), or visit all4ed.org/essa.

Straight A's: Public Education Policy and Progress is a free biweekly newsletter that focuses on education news and events in Washington, DC, and around the country. The format makes information on federal education policy accessible to everyone from elected officials and policymakers to parents and community leaders. Contributors include Jason Amos, editor; Kristen Loschert; Caroline Waldman; and Kate Bradley.

The Alliance for Excellent Education is a Washington, DC-based national policy and advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that all students, particularly those traditionally underserved, graduate from high school ready for success in college, work, and citizenship. For more information, visit www.all4ed.org. Follow the Alliance on Twitter (www.twitter.com/all4ed), Facebook (www.facebook.com/all4ed), and the Alliance's "High School Soup" blog (www.all4ed.org/blog).