

Assessment

BACKGROUND

The Assessment working group reviews statewide assessment requirements and needs, examines ways to take a more innovative approach to assessing students, strengthen formative tools, and make assessment data more timely and useful. ESSA requires states to assess students in English Language Arts and math in grades 3-8, and once in high school. The law also requires states to assess students in science once in grades 3-5, 6-9, and 10-12. Georgia will pursue maximum flexibility allowed through federal statute while ensuring validity, reliability, and comparability of state assessment options.

WHAT WAS THE MAKE-UP OF THIS WORKGROUP?

The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) has been committed to a plan development process that was truly stakeholder driven. Each of Georgia's ESSA workgroups were made up of a cross-section of twenty individuals with five members representing different areas of GaDOE and fifteen members representing stakeholders. Each workgroup was chaired by a GaDOE leader and key stakeholder.

- *Chairs:* Deputy Superintendent of Assessment and Accountability, Georgia Department of Education; Superintendent of Coweta County Schools
- *Representatives* for superintendents, principals, teachers, school improvement, special education, higher education, and teaching and learning. *Organizations represented:* University System of Georgia and Regional Educational Services Agencies (RESAs)

GaDOE will keep these workgroups intact in order to provide on-going feedback on the implementation of Georgia's Plan.

HOW WAS FEEDBACK FROM GEORGIANS GATHERED?

The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) held eight feedback sessions across the state. These were opportunities for parents, students, educators, business and industry, and community members to share their thoughts and concerns. Feedback was compiled, analyzed, and summarized by a third party so participants could engage in candid conversations.

WHAT IS ESSA?

The *Every Student Succeeds Act*, commonly referred to as ESSA, earned bi-partisan approval in 2015.

States were freed from their *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) waiver agreements and given the responsibility to develop state plans to support education.

ESSA significantly scaled back the authority of the Secretary of Education and U.S. Department of Education. Though ESSA gave states additional authority and flexibility over their education system, wholesale flexibility was not granted and statutory requirements vary in specificity from issue-to-issue.

Georgia has sought out maximum flexibility while creating a cohesive and aligned plan that is responsive to stakeholder feedback and supports our vision of *offering a holistic education to each and every child in the state*.

To learn more about Georgia's plan development process visit:

GaDOE.org/ESSA



HOW WAS FEEDBACK FROM GEORGIANS GATHERED? (CONT.)

Feedback sessions were also held with each of the State School Superintendent's advisory councils, representing middle and high school students, parents, teachers, and district superintendents. Business and industry, as well as civil rights organizations, were also engaged.

GaDOE utilized social media, a dedicated ESSA email address for comments, as well as public survey to gather feedback.

WHAT DID GEORGIANS SAY?

Common themes that emerged around the work of Assessment were:

1. Tests should be used to inform, rather than drive instruction.
2. Testing is important, but currently there is too much focus on testing outcomes for students at the detriment of educating the whole child.
3. State assessments have limited uses due to their summative nature and the time of year they are administered.
4. Formative assessments, taken throughout the school year, are needed to provide teachers with more timely information to inform instruction.
5. Additional flexibility is needed regarding how assessments are administered.
6. It is powerful what we report. It is important to think through how success and failure are communicated.
7. Assessment reports need to be easier to understand and provided in a more timely manner.

The full feedback summary report can be found at: GaDOE.org/ESSAFeedback.

This report was compiled through a third party evaluator.

Feedback themes, along with the response to each of those themes, are embedded within Georgia's State ESSA Plan.

AREAS OF FOCUS

- Simplify and reduce
- Formative assessments
- Innovation
- Flexibility
- Enhance communication
- Establish clear purpose and use
- Ensure relevancy and utility
- Mitigate unintended consequences
- Parent-friendly reporting

OUR PROGRESS

- **Clearly communicate the relevance and utility** of statewide assessments, especially for educators and students
- **Provide more interpretive guidance** so educators and parents can better understand and utilize assessment results
- **Enhance and increase access to sample items, student exemplars, and other assessment related resources** for parents and educators
- **Develop high-quality formative assessment tools**, including literacy and numeracy tools in grades 1 and 2
- **Explore assessment flexibility at the high school level** for districts as allowed by federal statute
- **Explore participation in the Innovative Assessment Pilot** that works with districts to develop and implement assessments that can be scaled up statewide
- **Strengthen technology-enhanced items** to increase student engagement and decrease the length of assessments

