



Richard Woods, Georgia's School Superintendent
"Educating Georgia's Future"

What can we accomplish together through ESSA?

The *Every Student Succeeds Act* – the replacement for the law commonly known as No Child Left Behind – offers an enormous opportunity to reshape Georgia's education system. The new law allows states and local districts to develop plans addressing standards (what children are required to learn), testing, school and district accountability (including school ratings), and special help for struggling schools and students. There are still federal requirements by which states must abide. However, in many areas, ESSA hands decision-making authority to states and local districts.

Accountability

When we talk about "accountability" in education, we're usually referring to school ratings and measures of school quality that help parents and members of the public learn more about a school. Georgia's current accountability platform is the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI), which relies on a variety of indicators to assign a numerical score, from 0-100, to every school in the state. ESSA [gives states more leeway](#) in designing their accountability system, which will allow us to make refinements to the CCRPI model. We're looking for suggestions that will help us represent school performance in a public-friendly manner that is less cumbersome and burdensome for districts and schools, while still providing an accurate picture of student achievement and school quality.

Assessment

When it comes to assessment – in this case, standardized tests mandated at the federal level – ESSA offers some opportunities. States must continue to assess all students enrolled in public schools in grades 3 through 8 and high school, but ESSA provides the opportunity for states to engage in important conversations with districts, schools, parents, and communities. For instance, there's a [pilot program](#) allowing seven states to develop "innovative assessment programs" that use multiple measures and innovative assessment practices to show student performance. We're seeking public feedback as we review testing requirements and needs, examine ways to take a more innovative approach to testing, strengthen formative tools (so that teachers have a reliable way to determine student progress and inform their teaching), and make assessment data more timely and useful.



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Education of the Whole Child

ESSA [broadens the focus on social-emotional learning](#). It also places an emphasis on a “well-rounded education,” defined as courses, activities, and programming that give all students access to an enriched curriculum and educational experiences – this includes the fine arts. We need feedback as we discuss ways to address students’ physical, social, and emotional well-being in the learning process, and suggestions of ways to provide an excellent, relevant, and meaningful education to all students, recognizing that all children learn at different rates and have individual needs.

Federal Programs

Georgia participates in various [federal programs](#) that allow the local school districts to provide supports for students in their schools. As we transition to the Every Student Succeeds Act, we are examining the way Georgia identifies schools in need of assistance and the type and quality of assistance provided by the state. We’re looking for suggestions on using federal programs/dollars to ensure access and equity to these supports for all students. The ESSA also aims to make sure state, local and community resources are supporting school improvement. Streamlining the processes for schools and districts to use the resources the federal dollars provide is a goal for the state plan.

Teacher & Leader Development

Teacher and leader quality has an enormous impact on student achievement, and we’re continuing to examine ways to strengthen the teaching profession and empower and support school leaders. As this work continues, we need your feedback on teacher preparation, recruitment, retention, development, and personalized professional learning.

Visit gadoe.org/ESSA to learn more. To offer feedback as Georgia develops its ESSA plan, [attend a public feedback session](#) or email feedback to essa@doe.k12.ga.us.