

Summary of ESSA Workgroup Collaborative Items

Statement of Purpose

Education organizations and stakeholders across Ohio embrace the opportunities provided within the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to set forth a vision of high-quality education in Ohio. Our group of education stakeholder organizations has identified five key areas that must be improved to ensure a better learning environment for students. Embedded within these opportunities is an emphasis on providing all students the support and resources needed to succeed in school and prepare them for college or careers.

Early Childhood

- Focus on early literacy and childhood education -- providing needed support to students in their earliest years of learning rather than intensive interventions later in their educational career.
- Equity in resources serving our neediest learners in order to improve services to children and their families.
- Coordination among Head Start, early childhood initiatives (Birth-Age 8), and Title funding. Using best practices and educator professional development on the academic, social, and emotional needs of learners to ensure educational opportunities for the whole child.

*ESSA provides for Professional Development Grants through a competitive Preschool Development Grant. These grants provide funding to states to promote coordination and collaboration between existing early childhood programs and systems to improve the access to quality programs for low income and disadvantaged children. ESSA authorizes a new \$250 million early childhood education program. **Whether or not Ohio is a recipient of these funds, the fact that these funds are being provided within ESSA demonstrates the need for quality programs with a focus on interventions, support, and equity for our youngest learners.***

Assessments

- Identify and articulate the purpose and use of state mandated assessments. Assessments should be communicated in a language that is easily understood by families, educators, and other education stakeholders. This would include a description and purpose of each assessment, valid uses of the data, and a clear explanation of the results.
- Audit the current assessments utilized for Ohio's accountability and explore alternative methods of assessment in order to assess students in the least invasive way possible. The amount of time spent on state mandated testing should be further reduced to absolute minimums in order to provide more time for learning and local formative assessment.

- Apply the 1% limit on alternative assessment for students with significant cognitive disabilities on a statewide basis, as opposed to being applied at the district or school level.
- Establish a period of stability for tests and testing windows. Provide timely feedback to allow for the testing data to be used to inform instruction and enhance student learning.
- Utilize test data for the purposes identified by the selected assessment to ensure validity. Assessment results should not be utilized in making high-stakes decisions concerning students, staff, or schools. The impact of student growth/test scores on educator evaluation and school effectiveness should be eliminated.

*ESSA provides the opportunity to further reduce the amount of standardized testing. It decouples testing and high-stakes decision making for students and educators. It further allows states to set a cap limiting the amount of time students spend taking annual standardized assessments. The SMART Act provides funding for states to audit and streamline assessments, and eliminate those that are duplicative. **Reducing the amount of time spent on testing results in more time for teaching and learning to take place in the classroom.***

Accountability/State Report Card/School Improvement

- Focus on the **purpose** of Ohio's Report Card including **what** is being reported as well as **how** the results are reported and interpreted within the community.
- Develop an easily understood guide for community members to be able to make sense of the data being reported about their schools/districts.
- Simplify the state report card, while allowing for a district's unique circumstances (such as poverty level) which can be identified within a non-academic indicator as provided for in ESSA.
- Provide an opportunity for schools and districts to add explanatory comments to the report card in order to provide additional context to the community.
- Identify those schools needing comprehensive supports and interventions for lowest performing schools based on "what works," including evidence-based interventions and resource equity. The development of any intervention strategies should allow for local decision making in the school improvement process.

*ESSA gives states discretion to choose **at least one** school quality and student success indicators within two parameters: the indicators must (1) allow for meaningful differentiation in school performance; and (2) be valid, reliable, comparable, and statewide. Additionally, ESSA provides five examples of indicators and then adds that the state may use "any other indicator the state chooses that meets the requirements of the school quality and success clause". **ESSA allows for more than one non-academic indicator. Any selected indicator(s) must be applied across the state.***

Of note, the four academic indicators in the aggregate must have greater weight than the 5th non-academic indicator (school success/student support).

Discussions around the non-academic indicators of school success or student support allowed within ESSA can provide schools and districts an opportunity to tell their story and focus on the varied educational supports/opportunities that are provided for all students through a well-rounded curriculum but are not reflected in the academic indicators.

Family Engagement

- Provide equity of resources for “special families” – special education, English Language Learners, military families, and socioeconomic status throughout the state. These needs are large and evolving as the student population of Ohio continues to diversify.
- Invest more than 1% of Title I funding for family engagement. A key component in family engagement is providing for supportive professional learning on effective family engagement practices for teachers and school leaders.
- Use clear, consistent language with communities and families to develop stronger connections and school/family partnerships that endure.

*ESSA authorizes Statewide Family Engagement Centers to support and provide comprehensive training on parent education and family-school partnerships. Multiple provisions in ESSA ensure that every student has access to a high quality education, regardless of zip code, and that strategies to engage families and communities are central to school improvement efforts. ESSA includes provisions for the Community Support for School Success program, which provides grants for Full-Service Community Schools. **A focus on families and communities prepares all stakeholders to truly partner in student-focused programs and supports when education, accountability, interventions, and successes are shared. Collaborative partnerships should focus on valid programs and supports for students with a shared sense of accountability and success.***

Educator Capacity

- Promote professional learning that provides time to collaborate, work with data to make informed decisions, and be involved in guiding the instructional decisions.
- Decouple assessments from educator evaluations (teacher and principal) in order to emphasize educator performance and growth.
- Adjust OTES and OPES to drive professional growth rather than serve as compliance checklists.

Consider the interwoven relationship between educator capacity and other key decisions within ESSA. *ESSA provides that Title II grant funding continues to be used to increase student achievement while increasing quality and access to effective teachers, principals, and other school leaders. Title II also ends federally mandated evaluations. States will be allowed to develop, improve, and implement educator*

evaluation systems, so long as they consult with stakeholders including educators, paraprofessionals, and their unions. ESSA makes resources available to states that could be used to develop or strengthen educator induction and mentoring programs. This is of particular importance given recent polls that show that fewer college bound students are electing to go into the education profession. Further, ESSA allows district funds to be used to enhance collaboration and teacher-led professional development aligned with students' learning needs. Quality professional learning opportunities support growth in educator learning which in turn impacts student learning.

Collaborative Educator Stakeholder Organizations:

- **Buckeye Association of School Administrators**
- **Ohio Association of Elementary School Administrators**
- **Ohio Association of School Business Officials**
- **Ohio Association of Secondary School Administrators**
- **Ohio Education Association**
- **Ohio Federation of Teachers**
- **Ohio Parent Teacher Association**
- **Ohio School Boards Association**