



# WASHINGTON

## Accountability System Fact Sheet



### The Every Student Succeeds Act

In December 2015, Congress passed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), returning power back to the states for the creation of their education accountability systems. States now have a tremendous opportunity to involve a diverse group of business and community leaders in the development of ambitious goals and metrics for their unique student population and economic environment. This new law replaces the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which has been in place since 2002. The biggest shift in ESSA is that the law gives much greater flexibility for the design of statewide accountability systems. The law does preserve the requirement for states to have a system that addresses data by race, income and learning needs; to test in at least math and reading in grades 3-8 and once in high school as well as science in grade spans, and to identify low-performing schools requiring intervention.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce as well as many state and local chambers across the country, have a long and successful history of advocating on behalf of rigorous academic expectations for all students to prepare them for college and career. In the next two years, the business community has an important role to play in ensuring that every state sets high goals and puts a plan in place to measure and meet those goals. Despite giving states more control, ESSA does require the following:

- Each state must implement a state-designed accountability system that includes long-term goals, such as percentage of growth in third-

grade reading for African-American students, measured by annual indicators, such as the end-of-year statewide reading exam;

- States must include academic indicators, such as student growth and proficiency, and school quality or student success indicators such as student or educator engagement, school climate and post-secondary readiness;
- States must report annually on the progress made in each of their schools;
- States must identify at least 5 percent of their lowest-performing Title I schools, high schools that fail to graduate one-third or more of their students, and schools for which a subgroup of students is consistently underperforming over a period of time, determined by the state, as needing *comprehensive* support;
- States must annually identify any school with a portion of its students that are consistently underperforming, based on all of the indicators in the state accountability system, as needing *targeted* intervention and support; and
- States and districts must work with the identified low-performing schools to determine the appropriate interventions to support student outcomes.

Prior to the passage of ESSA, NCLB required states to make adequate yearly progress toward 100 percent student proficiency in English/language arts and math on state tests by the 2013-2014 school year; otherwise, schools were deemed “in need of improvement” and subject to consequences. In 2011, the U.S. Department of Education implemented

a waiver program offering states the opportunity to apply for flexibility from key provisions of the law. In exchange for additional prescriptive federal requirements, states that received a waiver had more flexibility in setting goals for schools, determining how to measure school performance, and identifying which schools needed additional support.

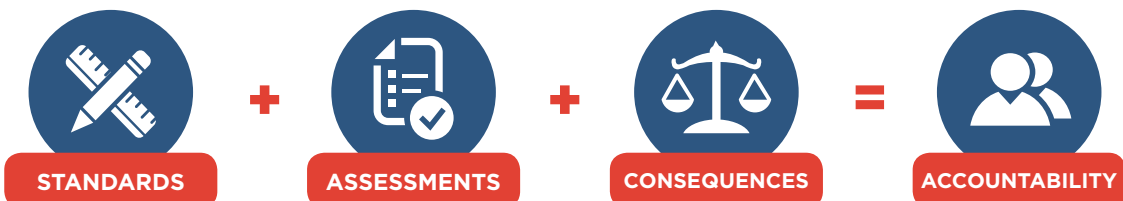
The U.S. Department of Education has already begun the rulemaking process to develop ESSA regulations

and guidance. It is important that the business community is engaged in this process leading up to the 2017-2018 timeline for when states must implement a new accountability system. The business community can and should be a vocal advocate for the necessary elements of an accountability system that ensures all students are receiving a high-quality education that will prepare them for college and the demands of today's workforce.

## What is accountability, and what are the principles of a good accountability system?

Accountability is a process for determining how well districts and schools are serving students and taking action when a district or school is not achieving the desired outcomes. There is no silver bullet to creating an effective accountability system. There are, however, core principles of a strong state accountability system, which include:

- 1 HIGH EXPECTATIONS:** College and career ready state standards, annual assessments aligned to those standards, and a rigorous benchmark for proficiency on the state assessments;
- 2 CLEAR AND AMBITIOUS STATEWIDE GOALS FOCUSED ON BOOSTING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND CLOSING ACHIEVEMENT GAPS:** These goals need to be established at a minimum in reading and math assessment results as well as graduation rates;
- 3 ACCESSIBLE AND DISAGGREGATED DATA:** School and district performance results, disaggregated by race, income and learning needs, that are publicly reported in a clear and transparent way;
- 4 STRAIGHTFORWARD SCHOOL RATINGS:** Easily explained school ratings or labels are based on a core set of accountability measures focused on student performance as well as progress for all groups of students; and
- 5 EVIDENCE-BASED INTERVENTION PLAN:** States require proven and effective interventions and appropriate consequences for schools that are not meeting their goals.



## What is in Washington's current accountability system?

The U.S. Department of Education did not renew Washington's waiver request for additional flexibility.

### STANDARDS/ASSESSMENTS

In 2011, Washington adopted college and career readiness standards in English/language arts and math. Last spring, Washington administered Smarter Balanced assessments, which measure students against challenging academic expectations. As a result, Washington's latest student test results more closely reflect proficiency rates identified by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), indicating parents and teachers are receiving more accurate information about their children's readiness.

### ACCOUNTABILITY GOALS, PROGRESS MEASURES AND ANNUAL INDICATORS

The Washington State Achievement Index is used to calculate how well schools are serving the learning needs of students. The Achievement Index currently includes the following indicators:

- Student achievement: measured by students who perform Proficient or Advanced on the reading, writing, math and science assessments;
- Student growth: measured for all students and targeted groups of students based on the state exams; and
- College and career readiness: includes five-year cohort graduation rates for all students and targeted groups of students; the percentage of students earning high school credit in a dual-credit program or earning a state or nationally recognized industry certification; and the percentage of students performing at or above a college and career readiness score on the 11th-grade assessments.

### SCHOOL IDENTIFICATION

The Washington State Achievement Index awards each school a rating from 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest) and color-codes school performance. Schools are also classified into one of six tiers: Exemplary, Very Good, Good, Fair, Underperforming and Lowest 5%. Schools that receive a blue or green color represent educational outcomes characterized as Good or better, while schools that receive an orange or red color represent educational outcomes characterized as Fair or worse.

Washington identifies and provides services and supports to the lowest 5 percent of schools based on the performance of their all students group on the state assessments and, if applicable, the five-year cohort graduation rate. Washington also provides supports and services to the lowest 10 percent of schools based on the performance of their subgroups on state assessments.

## What questions should I be asking my state leaders?

1. How is our state ensuring that we are meeting the learning needs of all students?
2. Is our state transparent and timely with how student performance data is reported and providing this information in a parent-friendly format?
3. What information are parents given, when and by whom? How does this level of disclosure compare to surrounding states?
4. Are we holding schools accountable for the right things? What are the indicators, and how are they calculated and weighted? How are indicators that focus on academic learning used to be a "much greater" part of the overall system?
5. Is our state's school grading or classification system easily understandable for parents and the public?



6. How are we ensuring that struggling schools and students are properly identified and supported?

7. What is our state doing to ensure that districts are implementing evidence-based interventions in schools?

## Where do I go for more information?

**WASHINGTON ACCOUNTABILITY WEBSITE:** [www.k12.wa.us/accountability](http://www.k12.wa.us/accountability)  
**U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE FOUNDATION:** [www.achievetomorrow.org](http://www.achievetomorrow.org)  
**HONESTY GAP:** [www.honestygap.org](http://www.honestygap.org)  
**EDUCATION TRUST:** [www.edtrust.org](http://www.edtrust.org)

