

CCSSO's ESEA Key Priorities

As leaders of state public education systems, state education Chiefs, through their membership in the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), have taken a strong position on the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to make sure it works best for students in the classroom today and in future years. Chiefs have consistently supported annual measurement of student achievement, clear accountability for schools and states, and flexibility that allows for states to improve education for all children. We continue to support these priorities going forward.

As the 114th Congress convenes in January of 2015, we expect that it will move quickly to reauthorize ESEA. Therefore, the CCSSO Board has taken action to provide guidance and direct CCSSO's advocacy on behalf of state education Chiefs regarding ESEA reauthorization. These priorities are consistent with the public positions CCSSO has taken over the past five years regarding assessment and accountability, and these positions remain relevant today.

The members of CCSSO support measuring student progress at least once a year because every parent has a right to know how their child is performing academically in public school. At the same time, we encourage innovation in our states so they can explore new, and possibly better, ways for measuring the academic progress of students in the future. This position is consistent with the [Next-Generation Accountability Principles](#) that CCSSO released in June 2011, which explicitly states this commitment but also gives states the flexibility to choose the assessment to use to make those determinations. Similarly, in October 2014, CCSSO made a [commitment](#) to work with local school districts to make sure students are taking high-quality assessments while also being thoughtful about the number of assessments students are taking as part of a coherent assessment system. CCSSO also has advocated on behalf of states that are interested in taking a different approach to assessment and accountability through its [Innovation Lab Network](#). In particular, CCSSO has advanced the work taking place in New Hampshire, a model that seeks to use performance-based assessments for accountability purposes in several pilot districts.

Based on this context, the CCSSO Board of Directors has outlined the following four priorities for the reauthorization of ESEA:

Priority 1: Assessment Requirements

States must evaluate all students annually in reading/language arts and mathematics in grades 3-8, and once in high school on assessments aligned with college- and career-ready standards. States must evaluate all students in science one time in each grade span (3-5, 6-9, and 10-12).

- In grades 3-8, and once in high school, all students will take the same state-selected assessments in reading/language arts and mathematics. At least once in each grade span (3-5, 6-9, and 10-12) all students will take the same state-selected assessments in science.
- For all relevant grade levels, states should determine if the annual student score is based on one summative assessment or the combined results of assessments throughout the school year.
- ESEA will explicitly authorize the U.S. Secretary of Education to approve pilot programs to support innovative assessment models. States should be able to apply for the necessary waiver to allow for these pilots at the district level at their discretion.

Impact: With this approach, states:

- Remain committed to equity and ensuring that all students are held to the same high standards of performance.
- Remain committed to transparency and to providing disaggregated data about student performance to parents on an annual basis.
- Remain committed to making annual determinations of student progress toward college- and career-ready standards.
- Continue to foster innovations that advance our ability to support student progress through state-developed pilots.

Priority 2: Accountability Requirements

States will have flexibility in designing and implementing state-developed accountability systems. These systems should:

- Make annual determinations for each school and district that meaningfully differentiate between schools and districts.
- Expect and support all students to make progress toward college and career readiness, with expectations of accelerated progress for low-income students, minority students, English learners, and students with disabilities.
- Use and report comparable assessment data and graduation rates to inform accountability determinations.
- Continue to disaggregate data, including disaggregation of data by student subgroup (for both reporting and accountability).
- Identify the lowest-performing schools as defined by the state accountability system and target the most significant interventions to those schools as defined by the state.
- Require and support district interventions in the lowest-performing schools and recognition and rewards for high-performing schools.

Impact: With this approach, states:

- Continue to have meaningful, actionable information about school and district performance.
- Remain committed to transparent reporting of data for all students.
- Remain committed to focusing support on the lowest-performing schools.
- Will have one coherent, state-driven accountability system.

Priority 3: Teacher and Leader Evaluation Requirements

States should have the responsibility and flexibility to design and improve teacher and principal effectiveness systems. Those systems should support continuous instructional improvement, recognize outstanding performance and include:

- Multiple measures of teacher and leader performance.
- Meaningfully differentiate performance.
- Provide actionable information to inform professional development and support.
- Strengthen the allowable uses of federal funding, such as Title IIA funds, to support state-driven and determined teacher evaluation systems.

A reauthorized ESEA should allow but not require the approval of the U.S. Department of Education of any state's evaluation system; however, ESEA funds may be used for the development and implementation of those systems.

Impact: With this approach, states:

- Remain committed to ensuring that all students are taught by and all schools are led by excellent educators.
- Remain committed to using information about teacher performance to determine how to support educators.
- Will maintain state control in developing evaluation and support systems and in determining how it coordinates across districts.

Priority 4: Funding and Flexibility

States will have the ability to meet the federal requirements through additional flexibility in the way federal funds are allocated. States should be given the authority to combine and utilize federal title funds to meet stated and agreed upon goals.

- Provide more allowable uses of title funds, such as increasing the viability of statewide systems of support. Allow states greater flexibility to consolidate title funds to achieve multiple programmatic goals that will better serve disadvantaged students.
- Authorize increased funding for state assessment and reporting systems.
- Provide additional support for equitable access to early childhood education.

Impact: With this approach, states:

- Are able to focus on achieving large statewide goals versus singular programmatic goals.
- Are encouraged to develop state-determined systems that best meet the differentiated needs and goals of a state.