

Public Hearing: ESSA Blue Print for Opportunities

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Thank you for your time this afternoon to share a few ideas and suggestions on how we can use the flexibility outlined in the Every Student Succeeds Act. As NCAE Vice President, I was part of the NEA push to move the ESEA/NCLB Act reauthorization to a focus on opportunities our students need to be successful instead of punishing schools as the NCLB act mandated.

Currently North Carolina has a report card portal that is rather comprehensive in providing a story about a school. North Carolina has made great strides in being transparent about what takes place in a school. NCAE believes our state needs to go further in collecting data in reference to Student Success.

1. Items such as school discipline policies and the impact on students of color, students with disabilities and students that identify as LGBT. This data point should include incidents of bullying, and coping interventions that are used to support a positive learning environment. The current dashboard does provide data on student attendance, but it is overall data for the school. Student attendance needs to be linked to each grade level and how the school addresses absent students beyond just a few days. Being present matters!
2. Additional information is needed to demonstrate efforts in creating a supporting learning environment. There needs to be data points on ratio of school counselors 1:250, school nurses and other community support services afforded all students. Teachers alone cannot meet all the needs of students. There may need to be a community/parent support data point on the dashboard as well.
3. The current state dashboard has information on tests and scores and proficiency rates. The dashboard needs to include the amount of time students are engaged in testing *VS* actual learning in each school. Does the school/LEA use additional benchmark tests or other forms of 21st century assessments and skills? Extra assessments should be noted on the dashboard. Schools/LEAs must share the types of alternative assessments being used and a menu of multiple measures for schools to select is needed, as ESSA calls for other assessments besides snap shot tests.
4. For the special student population there must be new alternative assessments created under the new flexibility of ESSA. Providing an exceptional child more time to take a test who can't read is not going to equate to success. Our state needs to investigate how Computer Adaptive Tests (CATs) can be used for cognitively disabled students to show what they have learned with fewer questions and questions that are geared to their level and not their age. Research has shown in states where CATs were used, the students perform better than on a non-adaptive test. Our state must also invest in the Dynamic

Learning Maps to help assess students with IEPs. North Carolina is on consortia that developed The Dynamic Learning Maps; therefore we should use what we believe to be a good alternative assessment. The DLM program will pull items related and relevant to the students IEP goals. The IEP is the student's road map or blue print for success, therefore the IEP goals should be what is assessed.

5. We know assessment is an important tool. Teachers have been creating assessments and tests since the first one room school house. ESSA is going to help us refocus on the learning taking place and not just the outcome/score. A major goal of ESSA is to ease the pressures of testing and bring an end to the test prep mania that for years has consumed schools worried they wouldn't meet Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) and face closure, firing of staff, or other sanctions. Therefore I reiterate the need for the dashboard to include the amount of time taken away from learning based on testing or bench mark tests instead of project-based or team work assessments during a class.
6. Measuring Growth Rather than Proficiency: In ESSA there is a new focus on demonstrating student growth. *For example*, if a student starts out at a 40 and moves to a 79, that's massive growth for some students and a student should be recognized for that, even if the cut score is 80. Moving away from the one day test snapshot will help return joy to learning for students. We have all heard that assessments should be designed to improve and inform instruction rather than determining that a teacher is not doing their job well because some students didn't make the cut score. Growth is what is important and ESSA highlights this in many areas. Taking the A-F grading of schools based on proficiency more so that growth and creating a fair and relevant system will be a giant leap for school communities.

The Road Ahead: Focusing on the implementation of what our state plan will look like is vital for its success. Having public hearings on what our schools should look like is a great beginning. As the plan is drafted over the next few months, beyond the policy makers you must have practicing educators and pro-public education partners, parents from diverse back grounds, school boards, and superintendents actively engaged in the process to make sure implementation goes smoothly. We are on the ground and we are experts. Buy-in from those in the trenches and providing educators a strong voice in the process is paramount. A buy-in by stakeholders who will be the ones responsible for the implementation is going to be very important.

As NCAE President Elect, I pledge our commitment to ensure that we will make time for being engaged in the details and glean feedback from our membership. We are aware that ESSA requires consultation with **organizations representing educators** in multiple places, ensuring that teachers and their local NEA Affiliate have a say in decision-making.