

Alaska Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Submitted State Plan

Executive Summary

September 18, 2017

The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) is pleased to provide the submitted Consolidated State Plan for the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). No significant changes were made to the final draft for submission. Changes were made to reflect additional background information or clarifications in response to stakeholder feedback. Stakeholder feedback to the final draft was generally supportive, and also reiterated the desire to find additional ways to measure student success and school quality. DEED is committed to continuing to work with all stakeholders to identify appropriate indicators for school quality and student success, and for refinements and revisions to other sections of the plan.

ESSA was signed into federal law on December 10, 2015, replacing the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). ESSA maintained some provisions NCLB, but intentionally provided more flexibility and authority to the states. No longer is a school required to be designated for improvement simply by missing one academic achievement target for one subgroup of students in a single year. ESSA requires states to develop plans that address standards, assessments, school and district accountability, and support for struggling schools, giving states more flexibility in the process of how to hold schools accountable and how to provide support to schools in the greatest need of support.

Alaska's Education System and ESSA

Alaska's ESSA State Plan represents over a year's worth of stakeholder engagement and department preparation in creating a plan to implement ESSA requirements within the unique context of Alaskan education. The elements of Alaska's ESSA State Plan are designed to support the broader work of improving Alaska's education system to meet the mission of public education in Alaska: An excellent education for every student every day.

Alaska's ESSA plan is a description of the system to help schools and districts measure their performance on key indicators, identify solutions for improvement, and target resources and support for all students to receive an excellent education and be prepared for college or career after high school. Key principles of the accountability system are described in sufficient detail to demonstrate alignment with the ESSA requirements. Additional details of the accountability system will be developed and implemented through business rules and state regulations adopted by the State Board of Education and Early Development following a public comment process. This gives Alaska the flexibility to make adjustments in the system within the requirements of ESSA as needed in the future.

This guide provides a summary of Alaska's plan to satisfy the main requirements under Title I, Part A and Title II, Part A, including standards and assessments, accountability, school and district support and improvement, and educator quality. Alaska's state plan also includes sections related to the individual programs covered in the plan.

Key Elements of Alaska's ESSA State Plan

Standards and Assessments

Alaska adopted more rigorous standards in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics in 2012 to ensure that Alaska students would be prepared for college or careers after high school. Stakeholder feedback indicated that Alaska should keep these new ELA and mathematics standards, but consider reviewing them in the future to determine if any revisions are needed.

Alaska administered the Performance Evaluation for Alaska's Schools (PEAKS) assessment in 2017 to all students in grades 3-10. Alaska will administer the PEAKS assessment in ELA and math to students in grades 3-9 in 2018 and beyond, likely moving to replace the end-of-grade test in high school to end-of-course tests in 2019.

Alaska's science standards and grade level expectations were last revised in 2006. Students in grades 4, 8, and 10 take the Alaska Science Assessment. The science standards will be considered for revision during the 2017-2018 school year, and a plan will be created to transition to a new assessment to measure the new science standards after they are adopted.

Accountability System

There are three main components of the accountability system: long-term goals, accountability system indicators, and annual meaningful differentiation of schools. Performance levels will be identified for each indicator and point attribution tables will be used to assign points along the continuum of school performance for each indicator in the system. Business rules will be determined, and state regulations to implement the accountability system will be created through a public comment process and adoption by the State Board of Education and Early Development.

- **Long-Term Goals:** The accountability system is based on long-term goals for academic achievement, graduation rate, and English learner progress in learning English.
 - **Academic Achievement in ELA and Math - reduce by half the percentage of students not proficient by 2026-2027**
 - All students and subgroups measured on the state assessments in ELA and math
 - Annual uniform measures of interim progress for all groups at state level and for each school and district from their own baseline based on 2016-2017 data
 - Groups that are farther from the long-term goal will have measures of interim progress that are more ambitious
 - **Graduation rate – 90% (4-year) and 93% (5-year) by 2026-2027**
 - Same long-term goal for all students and all subgroups
 - Goals set at state, district, and school level from own baseline data in 2016-2017
 - Annual uniform measures of interim progress, so groups farther from the long-term goal will have measures of interim progress that are more ambitious
 - **English Learners progress in learning English – 70% making progress, including attaining proficiency by 2026-2027**
 - Measures of interim progress of English learners in learning English based on annual increase of 2.3% from 47.5% estimated baseline of 2017 data.

- **Accountability System Indicators:** The accountability system will include the following indicators. The applicable indicators will be applied to schools with students in grade spans K-8 and to schools with students in grade spans 9-12. Schools will earn points based on their performance level on each indicator. Performance on all indicators will be reported on a dashboard type of display, along with the school's overall score.
 - **Academic Achievement in ELA and Math (all grade spans)**
 - Based on percentage of students scoring at proficient or advanced level
 - Weighted equally on ELA and math
 - **Academic Growth (schools with students in grades 4-8)**
 - Divide each achievement level into 2 sub-levels so student progress can be measured within an achievement level as well as from one level to the next.
 - Assign points to level of growth for each student from a value table, then calculate aggregate score for all students in the school.
 - Weighted equally for ELA and math
 - **Graduation Rate – all schools with 12th grade**
 - Assign points for four-year cohort rate and for five-year cohort graduation rate.
 - Weighted at 20% for four-year and 10% for five-year graduation rates.
 - **English Learner Progress in Learning English – all grade spans for schools with ELs**
 - Measure percent of English learners in grades 3-8 and high school tested grades that are making progress in learning English or attaining proficiency as measured on ELP assessment.
 - Making progress definition based on ELP level at first identification and a maximum of 7 years to attain proficiency in English.
 - Earn points based on meeting measures of interim progress or long-term goal.
 - **School Quality or Student Success (SQSS) Indicator – all schools**
 - Three indicators proposed for each grade span
 - **Grades K-8 indicators** proposed:
 - Chronic absenteeism – measured by percentage of students meeting definition of chronically absent (10% or more of enrolled days)
 - Interim assessments, district selected – measured by percentage of students participating in at least 2 administrations
 - Reading by Grade 3 – measured by percentage of 3rd graders proficient or advanced on PEAKS ELA assessment
 - **Grades 9-12 indicators** proposed:
 - Chronic absenteeism
 - Freshman students on-track for graduation – measured by percentage of students earning at least 5 credits (3 in English, math, science or social studies) by end of freshman year
 - Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS) – measured by percentage of graduating seniors meeting eligibility for APS
- **Annual Meaningful Differentiation of Schools:** All schools will receive a score from zero to 100 on an index based on the indicators in the accountability system. Indicators will be weighted based on the grade span of the students in the school.

Accountability Indicator Weights

Indicator	Grades K-8	Grades 9-12
	Achievement in ELA & Math (weighted equally)	36
Growth in ELA & Math (weighted equally)	40	-
English learner progress on ELP	14	15
Graduation rate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4-year adjusted cohort • 5-year adjusted cohort 	-	20 10
SQSS indicator(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chronic absenteeism • Reading by Grade 3 • Interim Assessments • Freshman On-Track • APS Eligibility 	4 4 2 - -	5 - - 5 5
Total Points Possible	100	100

- Schools that have students in a mixture of grades between K-8 and 9-12 will receive points and weightings on indicators based on the percentage of students enrolled in the school in each grade span as reported as reported on the first day of statewide testing for ELA and Mathematics.
- **Students, Subgroups, and Participation**
 - Students will be included in the applicable accountability indicators (except graduation rate) if they have been enrolled continuously in a school for a full academic year (FAY) of October 1 through the first day of testing.
 - Subgroups included are same as under NCLB.
 - For the all students group or any subgroup to be included in the accountability system, there must be at least ten students in the subgroup (the minimum *n*-size). If the minimum *n*-size is not met in the current year, data from the previous 2 years will be aggregated with the current year. If the minimum *n* is still not reached, the indicator will not be included in the index. The points for the remaining indicators will be prorated in the same ratio to calculate the total number of points.
- **Designation of schools**
 - Every school will receive one of the following designations. Designations will be based on the overall index score as well as minimum thresholds on each indicator as determined by the business rules.
 - Superior Performance
 - Satisfactory Performance
 - Needs Improvement
 - Targeted Support and Improvement

School planning and support teams will be convened to support or direct the interventions listed above. The teams will ideally include stakeholders beyond DEED staff such as district staff, school staff, community representatives, etc. These teams will direct intervention options as appropriate to the needs of schools.

- **Resource Allocation Review:** Appropriate program specific support will continue to be provided by DEED staff. For schools designated for Comprehensive or Targeted support, an inter-programmatic collaborative resource review may result in state or district redirection of funding.
- **Technical Assistance:** DEED continues to provide support for districts to amplify student achievement by developing and supplementing district capacity through a broad array of technical assistance. Technical assistance strategies include:
 - Provision, training, and support of the school improvement planning process
 - Technical assistance on evidence-based practices
 - Funding and support for statewide training conferences
 - Program support delivered along with routine monitoring of federal title programs
 - Resources, guides, and training materials accessed through DEED’s website

The 12 key indicators of the *Alaska Effective Schools Framework* are included to provide guidance and focus on effective practices that strengthen instruction and opportunity for students. These indicators continue to be a core component of school improvement processes.

Educator Quality

There are two sections of the ESSA plan that address Educator Quality: Disproportionate Rates of Access to Educators in Title I, Part A and Supporting Effective Instruction in Title II, Part A.

- **Disproportionate Rates of Access to Educators**

DEED is determined to reduce the disproportionate rates of low-income and minority children who are served by ineffective, out-of-field, or inexperienced teachers. “Ensuring Excellent Educators” is one of the five priorities recently identified by the State Board of Education and Early Development.

For the past decade, economically disadvantaged (low-income) students and students of color (minority) have been twice or almost twice as likely to be placed with first-year teachers or to be taught a core content course by a teacher who was not highly qualified.

DEED will implement a comprehensive approach to continuous improvement with a particular focus on strategies that will help districts recruit, retain, and develop excellent teachers, who can then be equitably deployed in schools. DEED’s approach includes disseminating disproportionality data to raise awareness and identifying and supporting districts with particularly severe challenges based on identified root causes. DEED will continue to involve stakeholders and leverage and share successful practices from research, Alaska, and the nation.

To measure the effectiveness of the strategies, DEED will be reporting on the percentages of teachers categorized as inexperienced, out-of-field, and ineffective in high poverty and high minority schools compared to low poverty and low minority schools, and the percentage of those schools that are served by Title I, Part A.

- ***Supporting Effective Instruction***

Research shows that teachers are the single most important in-school factor of student success. Accordingly, DEED proposes to continue investing significant Title II, Part A funds in its Educator Growth and Development Systems. Strategies include developing and recognizing effective educators directly and by providing districts with technical assistance. Growth and development will be enhanced with online professional development networks, dissemination of lessons learned on blending learning from the Digital Teaching Initiative and district's work on personalized learning. Alaska is considering ways to provide support from educator induction to educator leadership opportunities. DEED will also use substantial funds to support its approach to reducing the inequitable distribution of teachers

DEED has the statutory authority to certify teachers, principals, superintendents, special service providers and other school leaders to ensure that students are served by quality educators. A teaching certificate can be earned with a bachelor's degree, fingerprint clearance, appropriate coursework or completion of an approved educator preparation program and passage of subject and content knowledge exams; courses to understand Alaska's unique cultures and history are also required. Additional strategies exist to boost recruitment.

DEED will work to improve the skills of educators to meet the needs of students with specific learning needs by providing technical assistance, services, and support aligned to school and district needs; disseminating successful district practices; partnering with relevant external organizations; and better coordinating across internal teams.

Collaboration with Alaska universities and colleges is another strategy to increase the supply of quality teachers. DEED's program review and approval process requires educator preparation programs to adhere to rigorous standards, prepare candidates to teach diverse students, and provide significant opportunities in the field. DEED will continue to seek and incorporate input from advisory councils and committees and other stakeholders on the activities supported under Title II, Part A.