



Talking Points: ESSA Accountability & Support

Key Messages

- Iowa's new system for school accountability and support was created with broad public input and reflects statewide education efforts already underway.
- This statewide system meets federal requirements outlined in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), but fits Iowa's context.
- ESSA, which replaced the No Child Left Behind Act, maintains a focus on school accountability and equity for all students but shifts decision-making back to states and local school districts.
- Iowa's system for accountability and support focuses attention and resources to schools that need it most.
- Iowa's system is designed to support schools, not punish them.

Accountability Determinations/School Identification

- ESSA requires states to identify schools that need the most support, for the purposes of ensuring students have the same opportunities for success that exist for students in other schools.
- In Iowa, we support this approach in the interest of transparency, accountability and support for ongoing improvement of schools.
- The state will identify schools for support and improvement every three years based on their performance on the following measures:
 - Student participation on state assessments, academic achievement (proficiency and average scale score), student growth, graduation rate, progress in achieving English language proficiency, and a student survey of safety and engagement (Conditions for Learning).
- Each school receives an overall score based on performance on these measures. Schools also receive a score for each subgroup of students, such as students with disabilities (subgroups must have 20 or more students to receive a score).
- A school will be identified for Comprehensive Support and Improvement if its overall score falls within the lowest 5 percent of Title I schools in the state or its graduation rate falls below 67.1 percent. A school will be identified for Targeted Support and Improvement if a student subgroup score is as low as the lowest 5 percent of schools in the state.
- Iowa's new accountability system places the greatest emphasis on growth. This is a change from the federally prescribed targets of the past, which over-emphasized student proficiency.
- While proficiency is important, Iowa's growth-model approach takes into account that students come to school with different starting points and that schools deserve recognition for making significant progress.

- The majority of Iowa's schools will not be identified for Comprehensive or Targeted Support and Improvement. These schools deserve credit for their accomplishments and can serve as a resource for schools that are working to improve.
- Schools that are identified will receive additional support from the state, are eligible for federal funds to help them improve, and will develop school improvement plans.
- Parents and community members of schools that are identified for support and improvement will have the opportunity to participate in the development of an improvement plan.

Comprehensive and Targeted Schools

Comprehensive Schools

- Iowa is identifying 5 percent of schools for Comprehensive Support and Improvement.
- Comprehensive schools are either high schools that graduate fewer than 67.1 percent of students, or schools that are in the lowest 5 percent of Title I schools in Iowa based on performance on accountability measures.
- Generally, these schools need assistance and support based on the performance of the entire student population.
- Schools exit Comprehensive status when they have demonstrated consistent improvement at the end of three years.

Targeted Schools

- Iowa is identifying any public school with an underperforming subgroup of students for Targeted Support and Improvement.
- This means schools that have one or more subgroup of students performing as low as the lowest 5 percent of schools in the state.
- Performance is considered for the following subgroups: Low-income students (based on eligibility for free or reduced-price meals), English learners, students with disabilities and students by racial/ethnic group (white, black, Asian, Hispanic, Native American, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander and multi-racial).
- Schools exit Targeted status when they have demonstrated consistent improvement at the end of three years.

Support for Comprehensive & Targeted Schools

- Comprehensive and Targeted schools receive federal funding and support through the state's Differentiated Accountability system. Schools are responsible for developing improvement plans with local stakeholders.
- State support includes assistance in identifying causes of performance issues, strategies and interventions to put in place, and an evaluation of what's working. This is a continuous improvement model.
- Improvement plans will be tailored to meet the individual needs of schools.

Conditions for Learning

- Iowa introduced an annual student survey of engagement, safety and overall learning environment, called Conditions for Learning, in spring 2018. Survey results represent one of the measures used this year to determine accountability scores for Iowa schools.
- The Conditions for Learning measure helps take Iowa's accountability focus beyond test scores to look at school performance more holistically.
- Research shows students who feel safe, actively engaged in their learning, and build positive relationships with others are more likely to succeed in school and beyond.
- Iowa students in grades 5 through 12 took the survey in the spring of 2018. The survey will expand to students in grades 3 through 5 in the spring of 2019.
- Survey results will serve as a tool to help schools, teachers, and parents identify areas of strength, as well as areas that may need attention. For students, the survey is an important opportunity to be heard and to be part of efforts to improve the learning environment.
- The Conditions for Learning survey is confidential, anonymous, and voluntary. Survey questions focus on issues ranging from student safety to positive student relationships to how school rules are enforced.

Iowa School Performance Profiles (New Report Card)

- ESSA requires all states to publish report cards reflecting the performance of the state, schools and school districts. Iowa's new report card is called Iowa School Performance Profiles.
- Report cards provide an overall view of school performance as well as more detailed information, making it easier for stakeholders to understand how each school is serving its students.
- The Iowa School Performance Profiles reflect the core measures that contribute to a school's accountability determination. The data will be updated annually.
- Having access to clear and detailed information enables parents and other stakeholders to ask questions and better contribute to local conversations about school improvement.
- Educators, parents and other stakeholders can use information in the Iowa School Performance Profiles to celebrate achievements, to pinpoint areas for improvement, and to ask questions.
- The Iowa School Performance Profiles are not the same as the Iowa School Report Card, launched in 2015 in response to a state legislative requirement. However, some overlap between the two exists, and the Iowa Department of Education will work to merge them in 2019. The goal is to have one report card that meets both state and federal requirements.