

ESSA Implementation and the Early Childhood Agenda: How the ECAC Can Join the Conversation

Four Key Steps to Building a Birth to Third Grade Continuum as Part of ESSA

ESSA Implementation and the Early Childhood Agenda

FOUR STEPS TO BUILDING A COORDINATED SYSTEMS APPROACH

1. **Understand** how the early childhood agenda is part of ESSA.
2. **Identify** process for participating in consolidated state plan development.
3. **Develop** policy and process recommendations.
4. **Build** a coalition to advocate for policies in ESSA implementation at state and local level.



FOUR STEPS TO BUILDING A COORDINATED SYSTEMS APPROACH

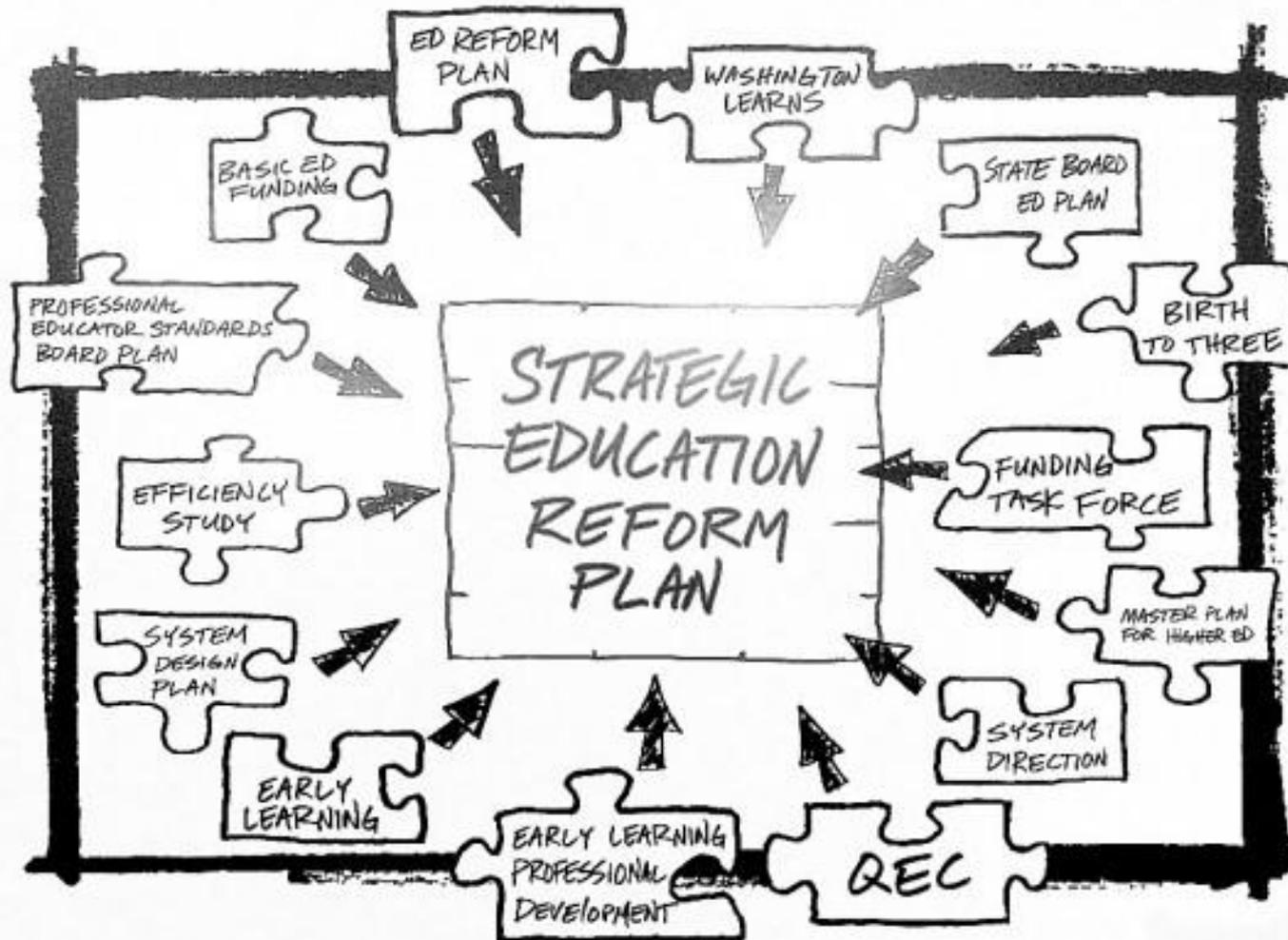
Step 1: Understand

ESSA Overview

- The biggest shift in ESSA is that it moves more authority regarding the design of state education systems from the federal level back toward states and districts to build on and go beyond state flexibility reflected in ESEA waivers.
- The precise meaning and impact of ESSA will continue to play out through regulations, guidance, and implementation over the coming months and years – presenting both opportunities and risks on the federal, state, and local levels for improving education systems and outcomes for all students in the nation.
- This new structure provides opportunities and challenges for the early childhood community, both inside and outside of state and local education agencies.

ESSA and Early Childhood

- References to early education programs, teachers, and students appear throughout the legislation, with a focus on improving transitions, enhancing quality, and improving coordination between local education agencies, schools and existing early childhood programs and reflect the overall transition in ESSA to a flexible approach to interventions and programming.
- The inclusion of early learning in the new legislation may provide an opportunity to further the conversation about state and local systems that connect early learning and k-12.



Break down the silos of many different education plans and create one seamless learning experience from early learning to career.

ESSA and Early Learning: Coordination Requirements

- Under the new legislation, states are now required to describe in their Title I State Plans how they will support both LEAs and individual schools that choose to use funds to support early learning programs.
- The SEA is also charged with providing LEAs and schools with information about effective parent and family engagement strategies.
- **Opportunity:** These requirements may provide an opportunity for states to create strong early childhood offices that include a deep understanding of the components of early childhood programming, are designed to foster coordination and can disseminate and provide technical assistance to support best practices in early learning programs within school settings.

ESSA and Early Learning: Coordination Requirements

- The language in ESSA routinely encourages support for transitions between community-based providers and schools, including between Head Start and local schools, as part of LEA and local school plans to use Title I funds for early childhood programs, and as part of the planning for schoolwide Title I schools using funds for early childhood, and as a possible use of funds in targeted assistance schools.
- ***Opportunity:*** Transition activities are not defined within the legislation, providing an opportunity for SEAs, LEAs and local early childhood providers to work together to create appropriate and meaningful pathways for children and their parents into schools. This could include sharing assessment data, joint professional development, alignment of curriculum and standards, as well as summer learning programs for preschool children moving into school settings and family engagement activities.

ESSA and Early Learning: Coordination Requirements

- The SEA must demonstrate in the Title I plan how it has coordinated early learning services with agencies implementing CCDBG and Head Start.
- LEAs are required to coordinate with Head Start programs. The new law holds LEAs responsible for developing agreements to role work with Head Start programs to coordinate services, which could include data reporting and sharing, alignment of standards and curriculum, and transition plans for children moving from Head Start and into the public school programs for pre-kindergarten or kindergarten.
- The requirement to coordinate also applies to local schools who opt to provide early childhood programming as part of their schoolwide model under Title I.

ESSA and Early Learning: Coordination Requirements

- ***Opportunity:*** The ECAC can help provide the linkages at both the state and local level between the various agencies and provide policy options to implement the requirements of the new law.

ESSA and Early Learning: Data Reporting

- SEAs and LEAs are now required to report on the number and percentage of children enrolled in preschool programs. The language does not specify whether these include only children enrolled in school-based programs or if it is inclusive of all children in programs before school entry.
- ***Opportunity:*** state and local leaders may to begin to work together to understand where children are enrolled, whether they are enrolled in multiple settings to create full day and year programs, and to use that data both to identify service gaps and provide longitudinal data on interventions with young children.

ESSA and Early Learning: Local Service Delivery

- If an LEA opts to provide early childhood services using Title I funds, the district must demonstrate in their plan how they will "support, coordinate, and integrate services provided under this part with early childhood education programs."
- **Opportunity:** While the language in the legislation focuses on transition, it also creates a significant opportunity to ensure that new programs do not duplicate services, but rather work with existing programs to ensure all children have the full range of supports they need. This may include full day K, developmental screening/assessment, home visiting, transportation, professional development for community-based teachers, or direct services for infants, toddlers and preschool-aged children. This language may also encourage the local coordination of standards and assessment, as well as data sharing between and across settings.

ESSA and Early Learning: Meeting Standards

- The legislation makes clear that LEAs must demonstrate that any early childhood program funded through Title I funds must meet the Head Start Standards (defined in 641A of the Head Start Act).
- Further, the legislation now requires USED to work with USHHS to disseminate the standards to school districts, creating opportunities to provide technical assistance and promote coordination between Head Start and school-based early learning programs.
- ***Opportunity:*** The ECAC and other early childhood entities can help provide this information and link to appropriate providers of TA and make connections to existing partnerships, such as EHS/CC partners.

ESSA and Early Learning: Professional Development

- Both Title I and Title II include language encouraging SEAs and LEAs to expand professional development opportunities to include early childhood providers and to expand the child development knowledge of principals and other school leaders.
- This language promotes joint professional development that includes school staff and community based providers, and that focuses on transition, "issues related to school readiness," and other content designed to meet the needs of students through age 8.

ESSA and Early Learning: Professional Development

- If implemented well, these provisions could elevate the quality of professional development available to early learning providers, support the goals of the new Child Care and Development Block Grant, and improve alignment and expectations between community based early learning providers and pre-kindergarten and kindergarten teachers in schools.
- ***Opportunity:*** This could provide new funding for aligned professional development that incorporates child development and includes professionals along the early learning continuum.

ESSA and Early Learning: Competitive Grants

- Preschool Development Grants: ESSA creates a new \$250 million competitive grant program to help states create strategic plans for early learning that coordinate current federal, state and local expenditures for children birth to five, support a variety of settings designed to meet the needs of children and families, improve the quality of early learning programs in the state, and expand access to high quality programs. The new grants will be available to states in FY 2018, and will be managed through the Department of Health and Human Services, jointly with the Department of Education. States will be able to compete for grants in two categories:
 - **COORDINATION GRANTS**
 - **RENEWAL GRANTS**

ESSA and Early Learning: Competitive Grants

- The Literacy Education for All, Results for the Nation (LEARN) program:
 - ESSA includes \$159.9 million for a new literacy program designed to improve reading and writing from birth to grade 12, of which at least 15 percent must be used for state and local programs serving children birth through kindergarten entry.
 - Subgrants to schools for k-12 literacy instruction must coordinate with early childhood programs. Early literacy subgrants must go to early childhood programs that serve low-income or otherwise disadvantaged children and must be able to show a record of effectiveness in improving literacy achievement. Programs receiving an early literacy subgrant must coordinate their activities with literacy instruction in the local k-12 system.
 - States must work with the Early Childhood State Advisory Council and other state agencies working in early learning to develop the subgrants for birth to kindergarten.

ESSA and Early Learning: Competitive Grants

- Promise Neighborhoods Pipeline Services: As part of the design of the competitive Promise Neighborhood grants, successful applicants must show how they will provide "pipeline services" that address the needs of students in the served community, and grantees will be required to use at least 50 percent of funds on pipeline services in the first year (25 percent in the 2nd year).
 - Pipeline services are defined as "a continuum of coordinated supports, services, and opportunities for children from birth through entry into and success in postsecondary education, and career attainment. Such services shall include, at a minimum, strategies to address through services or programs" and include "high quality early childhood education programs" as well as parent engagement through home visiting and other strategies.
 - Grantees will need to demonstrate how they have helped to coordinate early learning services in the community.



FOUR STEPS TO BUILDING A COORDINATED SYSTEMS APPROACH

Step 2: Identify

ESSA Implementation: The Who and the How

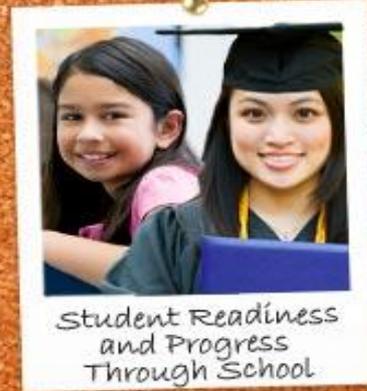
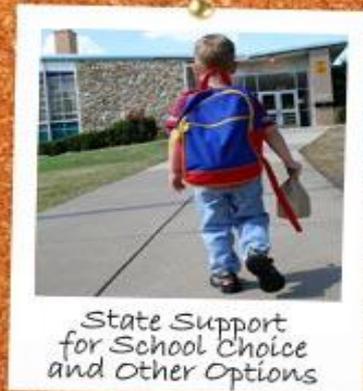
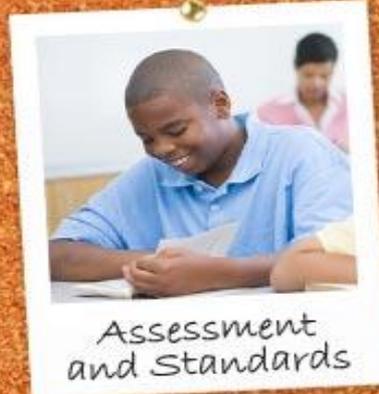
- Where are decisions made about implementing the law in your SEA?
- Who is in charge of the process?
- Where is your state currently meeting the new early childhood requirements and where will you need to add resources and policies?
- How will early childhood stakeholders be included in your state?



FOUR STEPS TO BUILDING A COORDINATED SYSTEMS APPROACH

Step 3: Develop

OPPORTUNITIES FOR STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT



The Stakeholder Engagement Process

- States must engage in "timely and meaningful" consultation with stakeholders throughout the state plan process:
 - during the design and development,
 - following the completion of the state plan, and
 - prior to the submission of any revisions or amendments, as outlined by the statute.
- The statute and proposed regulations also require each state to consult with its governor during the development of a state plan(s) prior to submission.
- The proposed regulations clarify that each state must describe in its consolidated plan (or in the single submission of its individual program plans) how it engaged in timely and meaningful consultation with stakeholders.

The Stakeholder Engagement Process

- Areas for engagement:
 - continuous improvement
 - challenging academic standards and academic assessments
 - accountability
 - supporting excellent educators and
 - supporting all students



FOUR STEPS TO BUILDING A COORDINATED SYSTEMS APPROACH

Step 4: Build

Appendix

ESSA Data Reporting Requirements

- By one analysis, there are more than 300,000 discrete items for states to report on.
 - **Data on school quality, climate, and safety** (including rates of in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, school-related arrests, referrals to law enforcement, chronic absenteeism, and incidences of violence, including bullying and harassment);
 - The **number and percentage of students enrolled in preschool** programs; and
 - The **number and percentage of students enrolled in accelerated coursework** to earn postsecondary credit while still in high school, such as Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses and programs and dual- or concurrent-enrollment programs.

ESSA Data Reporting Requirements

- **Student achievement information** must be reported for the accountability subgroups and for homeless, military-connected, and foster care students.
- **Graduation rates**, as well as student performance on the “other academic indicator” for elementary and middle schools, must be reported for the accountability subgroups, homeless students, and foster-care students.
- Data on the indicator(s) of **school quality or student success**, on progress toward the state’s long-term goals, and on progress against its interim indicators, must be reported for the accountability subgroups.

For more information on data reporting requirements, see: *The Every Student Succeeds Act: What’s In It? What Does It Mean For Equity? Public Reporting* at <https://edtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/What-is-in-ESSA-Public-Reporting.pdf> and *Data Provisions in the Every Student Succeeds Act* at <http://civilrightsdocs.info/pdf/education/ESSA-Data-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

Stakeholder Engagement Opportunities

- Accountability systems:
 - Over the next 18 months, states must design new systems of accountability, based on multiple measures. These may include measures related to early childhood and early elementary (such as kindergarten entrance assessments, developmental screenings, chronic absenteeism, aligned assessments of teacher/child interactions and others).
 - As states create indicators and data dashboards, there is a new opportunity to link early learning and k-12 data, interventions and outcomes.

Stakeholder Engagement Opportunities

■ Assessments:

- ESSA maintains requirements that states have annual assessments in grades 3-8 and are encouraged to move beyond the design of traditional assessments.
- The law also includes a small authorization of funds for states to complete assessment audits.
 - In states that choose this path, assessments in the early elementary grades—including developmental assessments, kindergarten readiness assessments and developmental inventories should be part of the audit.
 - These tools include authentic assessments that include observation, cross the full range of developmental domains and are aligned from birth through kindergarten and into third grade and may help influence the adoption of alternative assessment that can impact instructional practice across the grades, better reflect social-emotional development and embrace both academic and non-academic skills.

Stakeholder Engagement Opportunities

- School Improvement: States are required under the law to identify the lowest performing schools, based on their own indicators. The quality and availability of early childhood programs could be an important indicator of schools who could be at risk of failure. And, as LEAs develop needs assessments and "evidence based" interventions, they should be encouraged to look to partners in the early childhood community.



Stakeholder Engagement Opportunities

- Educator evaluation and improvement:
 - States now have the opportunity to determine whether and how to continue the systems of educator evaluation that they may have implemented under ESEA waivers.
 - In many states, these systems and indicators were not inclusive or customized to teachers and aides working in pre-k to third grade classrooms.
 - As states examine their evaluation systems, they may want to include a focused conversation about the different classroom organization strategies, instructional practices, and quality of teacher-child interactions that support high quality early learning settings.
 - They may also want to include a focus on coaching and mentoring, as well as peer-to-peer modeling for early childhood and early elementary classrooms.

Stakeholder Engagement Opportunities

- State and local plans and continuous improvement:
 - ESSA does require states and districts to submit new plans demonstrating how they will use ESSA funds to meet key requirements and adopt allowable uses of funds for activities such as early learning programs.
 - States and districts must engage stakeholders in the development of these plans, providing an opportunity for early childhood policymakers at the state and local level to influence the design and review of systems in their states and communities.
 - State plans are subject to a peer review process at the Federal level, which may provide another opportunity to highlight whether and how early childhood stakeholders are included in the development of each plan.