



ESSA IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

A Guide to Key State and Local Processes

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ESSA IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE: A GUIDE TO KEY STATE AND LOCAL PROCESSES

State and local educational agencies (SEAs and LEAs) are currently in various stages of implementing the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), with a majority of ESSA state plans already approved and moving forward. SEAs and LEAs are planning for and working to fulfill the law's requirements, as well as seizing upon new opportunities to partner with stakeholders to improve education for all students.

The following timeline outlines key state and local actions and planning processes in these initial years of implementing new **accountability, reporting, and school improvement systems**, from the 2017–18 school year through 2020–21 and beyond. It also documents **application and funding timelines** for federal programs under ESSA, as well as opportunities and expectations for **continuous improvement** over time. The timeline highlights both the commonalities across states in actions and timing under the law, but also the variation in timing as SEAs and LEAs implement the law within their unique contexts (indicated through visual “windows” of time).

States can use this guide as a visual tool and conversation-starter as they engage with LEAs and other stakeholders in the implementation of ESSA and related education work. The timeline is **meant to be customized to fit a state's specific context and timeframes**, in order to provide LEAs and other stakeholders with a sense of opportunities and requirements over the coming months and years. In particular, the timeline highlights opportunities and requirements for meaningful stakeholder engagement.

The **Key Terms** section of the tool further describes accountability and school improvement opportunities and requirements, and the **Key Resources** section provides further information, research, and best practices on accountability, school improvement, and stakeholder engagement.

ESSA SEA TO LEA TIMELINE

2018–19 School Year
and Beyond

ESSA ACCOUNTABILITY AND TITLE PROGRAM ACTIVITY

	FALL	WINTER	SPRING	SUMMER							
Many states fully implement ESSA accountability systems; transition to ESSA continues for remaining states.											
Fall of 2018/Winter of 2019											
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School identification/ratings: SEAs release school ratings to LEAs ("annual meaningful differentiation") and identify schools for support and improvement from 2017–18 school year (CSI, TSI, ATSI schools, depending on SEA timeline).• Report cards: SEAs and LEAs release report cards (with 2017–18 school year data, including per-pupil expenditures).				Summer 2019 LEAs apply: LEAs apply for FY19 ESSA Title funds, and any competitive ESSA funds (e.g. 21st Century Community Learning Centers, School Leader Recruitment and Support Fund, Education Innovation and Research grants).							
Summer/Fall 2018 ESSA funds to LEAs: SEA awards FY18 ESSA Title funds to LEAs.				Summer/Fall 2019 ESSA funds to LEAs: SEA awards FY19 ESSA Title funds to LEAs.							
SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG
Transition to new school improvement processes under ESSA.											
Fall 2018–Spring 2019											
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School improvement planning year: LEAs and schools get planning year underway to develop school improvement plans for 2017–18 schools identified (or implement improvement plans, in some states).• Development of LEA applications for funds: SEAs determine method for allocating school improvement funds to LEAs and develop LEA applications for FY18 school improvement funds.• School improvement plan templates and resources:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SEAs develop any school improvement plan resources (e.g. school improvement plan template, needs assessment, guidance/TA, evidence-based interventions, effective parent and family engagement strategies).• LEAs provide templates/guidance for school-level improvement plans (TSI/ATSI).• Preparation of school improvement plans: LEAs prepare to apply for school improvement funds and develop improvement plans (e.g. conduct stakeholder engagement, conduct/support needs assessment and data analysis, conduct resource equity analysis, develop improvement plans for lowest-performing schools (CSI)).• LEAs apply: LEAs apply for FY18 school improvement funds for 2017–18 identified schools (for planning year in many states).											

 indicates opportunity or requirement for stakeholder engagement

 Yellow color indicates further description of these terms/decisions, points/actions, and statutory requirements

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	FALL	WINTER	SPRING	SUMMER								
	First year of fully implementing new ESSA accountability systems in nearly all states; systems continuously improve over time.											
	Fall of 2019/Winter of 2020 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School identification/ratings: SEAs release school ratings to LEAs (“<i>annual meaningful differentiation</i>”) and <i>identify schools for support and improvement</i> from 2018–19 school year (SY) (using transitional data in some states). Exit and more rigorous interventions: SEAs exit any schools that meet exit criteria, and move some non-exiting schools to more rigorous interventions. Report cards: SEAs and LEAs release report cards (with SY 2018–19 data, including per-pupil expenditures). 											
	Summer/Fall 2019	DEC	JAN	FEB								
ESSA ACCOUNTABILITY AND TITLE PROGRAM ACTIVITY	ESSA funds to LEAs: SEA awards FY19 ESSA Title funds to LEAs.											
	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG
	Fall 2019 <p>School improvement funds to schools: LEAs award FY18 school improvement funds to SY 2017–18 CSI schools for planning and implementation (and any TSI/ATSI, depending on SEA timelines).</p>				Fall 2019–Spring 2020 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School improvement planning year: LEAs and schools get planning year underway to develop school improvement plans for 2018–19 schools identified (or implement improvement plan, in some states). Release of LEA applications for funds: SEAs release LEA applications for FY19 school improvement funds. Preparation of school improvement plans: LEAs prepare to apply for school improvement funds and develop improvement plans (e.g. conduct and document stakeholder engagement, conduct/support needs assessment and data analysis, conduct resource equity analysis, develop improvement plans for lowest-performing schools (CSI)). LEAs apply: LEAs apply for FY19 school improvement funds for 2018–19 schools identified (for planning year in many states) and submit school improvement plans. 							
SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT ACTIVITY												
	 indicates opportunity or requirement for stakeholder engagement				 Yellow color indicates further description of these terms/decisions, points/actions, and statutory requirements							
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 indicates opportunity or requirement for stakeholder engagement

 Yellow color indicates further description of these terms/decisions, points/actions, and statutory requirements

ESSA SEA TO LEA TIMELINE

2020–21 School Year
and Beyond

ESSA ACCOUNTABILITY AND TITLE PROGRAM ACTIVITY

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT ACTIVITY



indicates opportunity or requirement for stakeholder engagement

Yellow color indicates further description of these terms/decisions, points/actions, and statutory requirements

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KEY TERMS

Accountability system

The policies and procedures state education agencies (SEAs) use to set goals for how well all students (and groups of students) should be doing academically, measure and identify how well schools do in meeting those goals, and support and improve schools and local education agencies (LEAs) that are failing to meet the state goals.¹

In the first several years of new accountability systems under ESSA (i.e. starting in 2017–18), many SEAs will be phasing in and continuously improving new indicators, reporting data, and criteria for school improvement identification and exit, among other transitional changes.

Annual meaningful differentiation

The system used by SEAs to categorize schools based on performance on an accountability system, whether through a single summative rating (e.g. A–F, stars, index score), a dashboard of indicators, a matrix, or other approaches. The system must also identify schools that are in the bottom 5 percent of all Title I schools, schools that have graduation rates of less than 67 percent, schools that have a subgroup of students who are consistently underperforming, and schools that have a subgroup of students whose performance is so low that it is comparable to the performance of schools in the bottom 5 percent of schools.²

Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI)

In the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), these are schools that have been identified for additional targeted support and improvement by the SEA because one or more groups of students in the school are performing at the same level as the lowest performing 5 percent of Title I schools in the state. A state's ATSI schools are either as a subset of all schools in the state or a subset of TSI schools, depending on the state's identification rules. ATSI schools put together an improvement plan to be approved by the LEA.

SEAs vary in how often they identify ATSI schools, ranging between annually and every three years. ESSA requires SEAs to begin identifying schools for ATSI in 2018–19 (see ESSA §1111(d)(2)(D)).

Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI)

A category of schools in which a large share of students are not meeting SEA goals. These include schools in the bottom 5 percent of all Title I schools in the state based on the SEA's system of annual meaningful differentiation, schools with graduation rates below 67 percent, and additional targeted support and improvement schools that have not improved (i.e. schools with chronically underperforming subgroups). These schools must design and implement a support and improvement plan which is comprehensive and designed to raise achievement for all students in the school.³

While most SEAs identify CSI schools every 3 years (starting in 2018–19), some SEAs identify schools annually or every 2 years.

Exit criteria

Under ESSA, schools that are identified for comprehensive support and improvement (CSI) or for additional targeted support and improvement (ATSI) must meet certain performance criteria ("exit criteria") after a certain number of years, determined by the SEA. If a CSI school does not meet its exit criteria, it must implement more rigorous improvement interventions, which are determined by the SEA. If an ATSI school does not meet its exit criteria, the SEA must identify the school for CSI.

¹ Adapted from the [ESSA Guide for Advocates](#), a publications from The Leadership Conference Education Fund, found at <http://civilrightsdocs.info/pdf/education/ESSA/ESSA-Guide.pdf>.

² Adapted from the [ESSA Guide for Advocates](#), a publications from The Leadership Conference Education Fund, found at <http://civilrightsdocs.info/pdf/education/ESSA/ESSA-Guide.pdf>.

³ Adapted from the [ESSA Guide for Advocates](#), a publications from The Leadership Conference Education Fund, found at <http://civilrightsdocs.info/pdf/education/ESSA/ESSA-Guide.pdf>.

Identifying schools for support and improvement

ESSA requires SEAs to identify schools for support and improvement on a regular basis, and schools and LEAs then create school improvement plans in partnership with stakeholders to inform the supports and interventions for those identified schools. At a minimum, states must identify three categories of schools. (See *Comprehensive Support and Improvement, Targeted Support and Improvement, and Additional Targeted Support and Improvement* for further information on school identification.)

ESSA requires SEAs to transition their systems from school identification under NCLB/ESEA Waivers to ESSA's rules for identification. Most SEAs will make this transition in the 2018–19 school year, as their accountability systems (e.g. new indicators, weighting of indicators, etc.) are more fully transitioned. For school years 2016–17 and 2017–18, the U.S. Department of Education provided guidance outlining options for SEAs for identifying schools and using school improvement funds to support those schools in the transition to ESSA, either using prior methods under NCLB/ESEA waivers or moving to methods required under ESSA. (See *U.S. Department of Education transition guidance letters to states dated March 2016, April 2017, and January 2018*.)

LEA application for ESSA funds

Each summer, SEAs send LEAs their allocation of formula funds under ESSA (e.g. Title I, Title II Part A, Title III, Title IV of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act). For example, LEAs will typically first receive FY 2018 formula funds in summer of 2018. SEAs release an LEA application for these formula funds, usually in late Spring each year. In many states, the LEA plan template and this application for funds are one in the same. (See *LEA plan template*.)

LEA application for school improvement funds

ESSA requires SEAs to reserve 7% of their Title I, Part A funds for purposes of serving schools identified for support and improvement. SEAs may provide these funds to LEAs on a formula or competitive basis (or a combination of these approaches.) In either case, LEAs must apply for school improvement funds.

SEA timelines for releasing the application and funding for school improvement will depend on several factors including when the SEA's accountability system is approved, when schools are identified, whether funds flow competitively to LEAs, and whether a planning year is expected.



LEA plan (or LEA consolidated plan)

Each LEA receiving formula funds under ESSA (e.g. Title I, Title II, Title III, and Title IV) must develop an LEA plan that outlines strategies and priorities for the use of those funds in improving education, particularly in schools serving low-income students. LEAs must develop these plans in consultation with stakeholders (see *ESSA §1112(a)(1)(A)*), and the plans must be approved and monitored by the SEA (see *ESSA §1112(a)(3)*). SEAs and LEAs have the opportunity to align SEA and LEA ESSA plan priorities and strategies, and LEAs should also align their LEA ESSA plan with their LEA's strategic vision (e.g. district strategic plan).

In the transition from NCLB and ESEA waivers, most SEAs will release new LEA plan templates and questions for LEAs to fill out in winter/spring of 2018. The design of the new templates and the development of state plans are opportunities for ongoing and new stakeholder engagement, as well as opportunities for more coordinated priorities and supports to schools across the state and local levels. (See *LEA plan template*.)

Although some SEAs may require LEAs to simultaneously submit LEA plans and school improvement plans to receive funds, each document has a separate purpose and focus: LEA plans are focused across a variety of activities in all schools (e.g. teacher and leader development, afterschool, supports for students, etc.)—with a particular focus on serving low-income students, while school improvement plans are focused on improvement strategies for those schools not meeting minimum performance criteria for all or certain groups of students. (See *School improvement plans*.)



LEA plan template (or LEA consolidated plan template)

In the transition to ESSA, each SEA creates or revises an existing LEA plan template for LEAs to follow when they submit their LEA plans for ESSA funds. Most SEAs will release this new LEA plan template and questions in winter/spring of 2018. The design of the new templates and the development of state plans are opportunities for ongoing and new stakeholder engagement, as well as opportunities for more coordinated priorities and supports to schools across the state and local levels.

Note: In many states, the LEA plan template and application for funds are one and the same.



Monitoring, evaluation, and continuous improvement

SEAs are responsible for monitoring the use of Title I school improvement set-aside funds in school districts (see *ESSA §1003(b)(2)(B)*), and states are required to monitor and periodically review CSI plans for continuous improvement (see *ESSA §1111(d)(1)(B)*). LEAs have similar monitoring responsibilities for school-level uses of funds. ESSA also sets expectations across Titles that the SEAs will periodically evaluate or review and improve plans and strategies (see, *for example*, *ESSA §4203(a)(14)*, and *§1111(a)(6)(A)(ii)*).

SEAs and LEAs must determine their methods and structures for the monitoring, evaluation, and continuous improvement of systems and strategies, including how they will connect state and local processes and what partners they might include in this work. For example, the work could include an evaluation and research lead at the SEA or an outside evaluation and research entity.

SEAs and LEAs can set explicit expectations in guidance, templates, and technical assistance around continuous improvement efforts such as reviewing the impact of promising strategies and interventions employed; implementing tools to help districts and schools consider next steps if an intervention or support structure is not having the intended impact; and conducting ongoing stakeholder engagement to inform the improvement of plans and strategies.

As states implement their new accountability systems and have the chance to review new data from these systems, they could consider, for example, whether their exit criteria remain aligned with their vision and theory of action for the system, using ESSA implementation as an opportunity to continuously improve and align these criteria. Additionally, for schools that have not met their exit criteria and need more rigorous intervention (see *ESSA §1111(d)(C)(3)*), SEAs and LEAs can support the implementation of evidence-based interventions with strong evidence ratings and determine the increased levels of support in these schools and the mechanisms for delivering it. SEAs and LEAs also have an opportunity to determine what ongoing supports and monitoring those recently exited schools might receive to ensure continued growth.

More rigorous interventions

Under ESSA, schools that are in comprehensive support and improvement or that have chronically low-performing subgroups must meet certain performance criteria (“exit criteria”) after a certain number of years (determined by the SEA) or they must implement more rigorous improvement interventions, which are determined by the SEA.



Planning year

ESSA allows states to provide LEAs and schools with a planning year to prepare to implement school improvement supports and interventions in each school identified for improvement. SEAs, LEAs, and schools could choose to use a planning year for conducting those school improvement activities required under ESSA (see *ESSA §1111(d)(1)*), including:

- Conducting a school-level needs assessment to inform school improvement,
- Identifying evidence-based interventions,
- Identifying resource inequities,

- Conducting stakeholder engagement around developing a school improvement plan, and
- Creating the school improvement plan itself.

They could also consider implementing best practices such as deeper diagnostic review, LEA-level needs assessments and resource equity reviews, cycles of learning and continuous improvement, and providing guidance and technical assistance to LEAs and schools.

Even in states that do not offer a planning year, the required activities mentioned above must take place each time a school is identified prior to school improvement plans being implemented in a school—including robust stakeholder engagement.



Report cards

Each year, SEAs and LEAs are required under ESSA to report on multiple, disaggregated measures about schools across districts and the state, including on the accountability measures approved in states' ESSA plans (see *ESSA §1111(h)*), and district-and school-level per-pupil expenditures (beginning in 2017–18) per ESSA's new fiscal transparency requirements (see *ESSA section 1111(h)(1)(C)(x) and (2)(C)*). Accountability and other student-related data must be separated (i.e. disaggregated) by student characteristics, including major racial and ethnic groups, family income, disability status, and language status. Some data must also be disaggregated by gender, foster care status, homeless status, military connected status, and migrant status.

SEAs and LEAs should make these potentially robust data elements as actionable and easy to interpret as possible, in order for them to best inform needs assessments, supports, and interventions for school improvement. SEAs and LEAs have the opportunity to create user-friendly dashboards, tools, and technical assistance sessions to help LEA leaders, school leaders, and other stakeholders understand and use the data for improvement purposes. In designing and continuously improving the report cards, SEAs and LEAs should continue their robust stakeholder engagement processes to gain input.



Resource equity analysis

ESSA creates two requirements for resource equity analyses that can help provide clear data and support to schools and stakeholders, particularly as school improvement plans are being developed:

(1) States must periodically review resource allocations across schools in LEAs serving a significant number of CSI and TSI schools. (See *ESSA §1111(d)(3)(A)(ii)*.)

(2) Schools identified for “additional targeted support” in which a school has one or more significantly low-performing subgroups must identify resource inequities (at the LEA and/or the school budgeting level) to be addressed by the school improvement plan (see *ESSA §1111(d)(2)(C)*). This analysis would typically take place during the development of the school improvement plan (e.g. planning year).

Guidance, tools, and templates can help LEAs and their schools to prepare for this resource equity analysis.



School improvement plan

Each school identified for support and improvement under a SEA accountability system must develop a school improvement plan. This is a plan that the school designs and implements to raise student achievement and success on either a comprehensive (meaning for all the students in the school) or targeted (meaning for a subgroup of students in a school) basis once the school has been identified for support and improvement. LEAs and schools are required under ESSA to develop school improvement plans that are informed by an assessment of the needs of the particular school, developed with stakeholder input (e.g. parents, teachers, and principals), and that implement evidence-based strategies.⁴

⁴ Adapted from the ESSA Guide for Advocates, a publication from The Leadership Conference Education Fund, found at <http://civilrightsdocs.info/pdf/education/ESSA/ESSA-Guide.pdf>.

LEAs lead the development of school improvement plans for schools identified for Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI), while schools lead the development of plans for schools identified for Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) and Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI).

ESSA requires CSI and TSI/ATSI plans to be developed “in partnership with stakeholders (including principals and other schools leaders, teachers, and parents)” (see ESSA §1111(d)(1)(B) and §1111(d)(2)(B)). Many LEAs and schools will use their planning year to engage stakeholders in the development of school improvement plans.

All SEAs have the option to provide a planning year to LEAs and their schools to develop school improvement plans; however some SEAs may be requiring immediate implementation of school improvement supports and interventions. In states that forgo a planning year, LEA and school stakeholder engagement must begin as school improvement plans are developed over Summer or Fall, prior to implementation in Fall/Winter.

In the transition to ESSA (2016–17 and 2017–18 school years), SEAs can choose whether to identify schools and support interventions under NCLB/ESEA Waiver processes or under the new ESSA school identification processes. For this reason, school improvement planning and implementation is likely to be different in 2016–17 and 2017–18 compared to 2018–19 and beyond. (See *U.S. Department of Education transition guidance letters to states dated March 2016, April 2017, and January 2018*.)



School improvement plan resources

As LEAs and schools prepare to develop school improvement plans in partnership with stakeholders, SEAs and LEAs can provide relevant tools, supports, and guidance to help maximize the effectiveness of the plans. For example, SEAs and LEAs can help identify “evidence-based” practices required to be included in school improvement plans (See ESSA §8101(21)(B) and §1003). They can provide guidance on meaningful, robust stakeholder engagement around school improvement plans. They can also provide tools such as school improvement plan templates, needs assessment formats, guidance and technical assistance on how to conduct deeper diagnostic reviews and cycles of inquiring for determining school improvement supports. SEAs are also required to provide technical assistance to LEAs serving significant numbers of schools in comprehensive and targeted support and improvement (see ESSA §1111(d)(3)(iii)).

Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI)

A category of schools that are identified through the SEA accountability system because they have one or more groups of students who are consistently underperforming. These schools must design and implement a targeted support and improvement plan that is approved by the district and is designed to raise achievement for the group(s) of students that is (are) consistently underperforming.⁵

SEAs identify TSI schools each year (see ESSA §1111(c)(4)(C)(iii)).

Transition year

ESSA requires a transition from SEA accountability and school identification systems under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and ESEA Waivers to the new systems required under the law. Over the 2017–18 and 2018–19 school years, many states will go through significant transitions in accountability and school identification, including testing out and adding new indicators, collecting new data, and bringing online new criteria for identifying schools in need of support and improvement. Given this, 2019–2020 is likely to be the first year that many SEA systems of accountability and school identification will be fully in place.

*SEAs will also continuously improve accountability systems and identification of schools over time.

⁵ Adapted from the ESSA Guide for Advocates, a publication from The Leadership Conference Education Fund, found at <http://civilrightsdocs.info/pdf/education/ESSA/ESSA-Guide.pdf>.

KEY RESOURCES

Accountability Resources

[States' Continued Commitment to Next-Generation Accountability Systems \(CCSSO\)](#)

[CCSSO Accountability and Reporting Resource Library \(CCSSO\)](#)

School Improvement Resources

[CCSSO Principles of Effective School Improvement Systems \(CCSSO\)](#)

[Building the State to Local Architecture for School Improvement –11 Key Levers to Support Leaders in Implementing a Robust System under ESSA \(EducationCounsel\)](#)

[ESSA Leverage Points: 50-State Report on Promising Practices for Using Evidence to Improve Student Outcomes \(Results for America\)](#)

Evidence Reviews for School Improvement under ESSA

[Review of Evidence: Arts Integration Research Through the Lens of the Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\) \(American Institutes for Research\)](#)

[School Leadership Interventions Under the Every Student Succeeds Act: Evidence Review, Updated and Expanded \(RAND\)](#)

[Social and Emotional Learning Interventions Under the Every Student Succeeds Act: Evidence Review \(RAND\)](#)

Stakeholder Engagement Resources

[Let's Get This Conversation Started \(CCSSO 1st in a series\)](#)

[Let's Keep the Conversation Going \(CCSSO 2nd in a series\)](#)

[Let's Continue the Conversation \(CCSSO 3rd in a series\)](#)

[Leading by Convening: A Blueprint for Authentic Engagement \(IDEA Partnership\)](#)

[ESSA Parent Advocacy Toolkit\(National Council on Learning Disabilities \(NCLD\)](#)

[10 Minute Meeting Guide \(National Education Association\)](#)

[Building Relationships with Tribes: A Native Process for Local Consultation Under ESSA \(National Indian Education Association \(NIEA\)\)](#)

[6 Keys to Engaging Families in ESSA \(EnEspañol\) \(National PTA\)](#)

[PTA ESSA Local Roadmap \(National PTA\)](#)

[Meaningful Local Engagement Under ESSA A Handbook for LEA and School Leaders \(Partners for Each and Every Child, a project of the Opportunity Institute and CCSSO\)](#)

[Process and Protest: Have Stakeholder Engagement Efforts Under ESSA Been Meaningful? \(Partners for Each and Every Child, a project of the Opportunity Institute\)](#)

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