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South Dakota to release education plan, Board receives high-level summary

PIERRE, S.D. – A [summary of South Dakota’s plan for educating students under the Every Student Succeeds Act](#) is now available. It was presented to the state Board of Education at its meeting today in Rapid City. The full draft of the state’s plan is expected to be released before month’s end – kicking off an official public comment period.

Development of the state’s ESSA plan follows a year of conversations with stakeholders across the state, including students, parents, teachers, school administrators, board members, legislators, tribal representatives and representatives from higher education.

“South Dakota was in a solid position when ESSA passed,” said Secretary of Education Melody Schopp. “For nearly five years, we have been focused on preparing students to leave the K-12 system college, career and life ready. Passage of ESSA provided us the opportunity to assess our system and look for flexibilities within the new federal law that would support our *state* priorities for educating students.”

Laura Scheibe, a deputy director with the Department of Education, told the board that while the state’s school accountability system would not change dramatically under the proposed state plan, it does include several innovative ideas for supporting student growth and development. For example:

- At the high school level, South Dakota will expand its accountability indicator related to college and career readiness. This means schools would receive recognition for providing opportunities for students (e.g., dual credit courses, Advanced Placement courses and exams, and career and technical education courses) in addition to measuring performance on the ACT or Smarter Balanced test.
- South Dakota will look to emphasize the importance of a positive school climate by developing an accountability indicator around the idea of safe and healthy schools. This indicator would apply to elementary and middle schools.
- South Dakota will look to explore options for allowing schools to assess students not based on the strict structure of grade levels, but rather at their level of learning.
- South Dakota will place an emphasis on the progress of students, whose primary language is not English, in learning the English language.

“We took our time in developing this plan – knowing that the federal landscape was changing and with the driving idea of doing what is right for South Dakota students,” Schopp said. “We look forward to the release of the draft plan and receiving additional input.”