

ESSA School Improvement Work Group

April 2016

South Dakota's current system of accountability has been built over the past four years in a collaborative manner together with stakeholders in response to federal mandates, as well as the needs of students and stakeholders in the state. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) offers the opportunity to take a thoughtful look at the elements of accountability, specific to School Improvement.

The discussions should be framed around the overall aspiration of the department: All students graduate college, career, and life ready. The intention of the school improvement system under ESSA is to support South Dakota schools and districts in preparing students to meet that aspiration.

ESSA calls for state-defined accountability systems with certain federally required components. South Dakota's current system centers on a School Performance Index (SPI) with multiple indicators of performance. This system informs and drives the supports and interventions that schools, districts and the state take in order to reach the goal of college and career readiness for all students.

Requirements: Points to Consider

Below are a series of questions and considerations that will frame our discussion regarding South Dakota's accountability system, specific to school improvement.

Overall System: Accountability is for a wide variety of consumers, not just education professionals. The system should be easily explained and understandable to a person not steeped in education policy. We would also propose that the collaborative work that has taken place to date to develop the current framework be honored. Finally, all schools must somehow be incorporated in a manner that includes the most students possible.

SPI Indicators: Elementary and Middle Schools

1. Student achievement: This is a required component of ESSA, measuring the performance of students on the state assessment who have met full academic year (FAY) requirements.
2. Other academic indicator: ESSA sets out that this can be either student growth or another valid and reliable statewide academic indicator that allows for meaningful growth. We recommend that the state's Academic Growth indicator be maintained because of the extensive work that went into developing the indicator and that we have yet to see the results of that work.
3. English Language Proficiency: The English Language Learners work group will provide this recommendation.
4. "Not less than one indicator of school quality or student success . . ." ESSA requires the use of an indicator of school quality or student success. It sets out examples of what could be used, including Student engagement, educator engagement, school climate and safety, etc. South Dakota's current system uses an Attendance indicator, which should be considered; other indicators could be added.

SPI Indicators: High Schools

1. Student achievement: Same as #1 above.
2. English Language Proficiency: Same as #3 above.

3. Four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate: This is a requirement of ESSA. At the state's discretion, this graduation rate may be combined with an extended-year graduation rate.
4. "Not less than one indicator of school quality or student success . . ." Similar to #4 above, except at the high school level. The College and Career Readiness indicator should be considered, although it could be adjusted. Other indicators could be added as well.

Points to Consider:

The flexibility offered by the ESSA leaves states room to innovate. Below are some questions to guide your initial thinking. This list is not exhaustive.

Overall System:

- Do we need multiple "accountability tracks?" How do we handle small high schools and other small schools? How do we handle alternative schools? Schools with large transient populations? Hutterite Colony schools? Online or virtual attendance centers? Should their accountability look different?
- The state has used a norm based system for differentiating schools. Should we consider moving to a criterion basis? What would that look like?
- What does school classification look like? Under ESSA, states must continue to reward schools and have schools in two different levels of improvement. How should we define the scale? (This will be coordinated with the School Improvement Work Group).
- Should South Dakota continue to use its Gap group? This was conceived as a means of increasing overall public reporting; its implementation has resulted in schools across the state being accountable for an additional 1052 subgroups because of n size suppression rules. Is it still useful? Should its composition be adjusted if it is retained?
- Should schools that meet the 95% participation rate receive "bonus" points?
- What is the role of the school board in school improvement?
- School Support Team Roles

Overall Indicators:

- How should SPI points be distributed? How points should be awarded when a school's n size for an indicator is too small to be publicly reported. (This may be frequent with Academic Growth and English Language Proficiency).
- What goals should be set for schools and districts?
 - Currently in place:
 - Achievement – decrease by half the percent non-proficient over 6 years (AMOs)
 - Growth – over three years all projected to be proficient or very high growth
 - Attendance – all students attending at least 94% of enrolled time
 - Graduation – 85% graduation rate for the four- year cohort
 - Completion – decrease by half over six years the percent of non-completers
 - College and Career Readiness – decrease by half over six years the percent not college and career ready
 - The new standard under ESSA is that the state must set goals and interim objectives (similar to what has been in place for Annual Measurable Objectives), but how those look are left to the state. The goal for English Language Proficiency will be determined in coordination with the English Language Learners work group.

Specific Indicators:

- Achievement: What is under performing and chronically underperforming?
- What do classifications look like? We have the 5% and 67% requirements, but do we need to include under performing and chronically underperforming?
- How often do schools get identified? Must designate at least every three years.
- Clearly defined exit criteria.
- What are the consequences for not showing growth or meeting targets?
- What are the expectations of comprehensive support and targeted support:
 - School improvement plan requirements
 - What is good evidence and meaningful change
 - Should improvement look differently based on identification (we currently have the 7 Turnaround Principles)
 - Should supports for schools look different based upon the reason for identification
- What are the consequences for not showing growth or meeting targets?
- Comprehensive Needs Assessments
- What is the SEAs role in feedback and monitoring?

Business Rules Questions:

- What rules does this group need to address for students identified as Homeless, Migrant, ELL, SPED, and Economically Disadvantaged?
- What is the minimum n-size reporting recommendation? What about suppression for other groups and in other circumstances (i.e., all students scoring at the same level; easily identifiable extrapolations)?