

## What is ESSA?

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed by President Obama on December 10, 2015. This bipartisan measure reauthorizes the 50-year-old Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the nation's national education law and longstanding commitment to equal opportunity for all students.

The new law builds on key areas of progress in recent years, made possible by the efforts of educators, communities, parents, and students across the country.

ESSA includes provisions that will help to ensure success for students and schools. Below are just a few. The law:

- Advances equity by upholding critical protections for America's disadvantaged and high-need students
- Requires that all students in America be taught to high academic standards that will prepare them to succeed in college and careers
- Ensures that vital information is provided to educators, families, students, and communities through annual statewide assessments that measure students' progress toward those high standards
- Helps to support and grow local innovations, including evidence-based and place-based interventions developed by local leaders and educators, consistent with our Investing in Innovation and Promise Neighborhoods
- Maintains an expectation that there will be accountability and action to effect positive change in our lowest-performing schools, where groups of students are not making progress, and where graduation rates are low over extended periods of time

## Highlights of Georgia's state ESSA plan:

- Simplifies and streamlines Georgia's accountability system. The redesigned College & Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) is focused on the whole child, rewarding schools that expand opportunities for students through fine arts education, world language instruction, physical education, AP/IB enrollment and career pathways.
- Rewards schools making significant progress with traditionally underserved subgroups (English Learners, Economically Disadvantaged, and Students With Disabilities) through the Closing Gaps indicator.
- Establishes a more proactive, four-tiered system of supports for all schools, with universal supports (resources, tools, and guidance) provided for every school in the state. As schools are placed on different tiers, they will receive more intensive and tailored interventions and supports.
- Affirms Georgia's commitment to pursue the maximum federal flexibility for state tests.
- Strengthens the state's focus on the whole child. In addition to the Beyond the Core indicator, which incentivizes student participation in enrichment courses like fine arts, world language, physical education/health, and career exploratory, staff at GaDOE are developing topic-specific guidance to help districts and schools leverage federal funds to address identified whole child needs.
- Establishes ambitious but attainable goals for groups of students, while rewarding schools that move students academically from one level to the next.
- Supports the alignment of tools, resources, initiatives, programs, and efforts so they work in a more effective and efficient way to ultimately impact the classroom.