



March 2018

THE EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT (ESSA): SUPPORTING EDUCATORS

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed into law by President Obama in 2015. It continues the Federal emphasis on accountability, standards, and assessment while returning significant decision making to the states.¹ In order to qualify for Federal funding related to ESSA, a state must submit a plan for approval by the U.S. Department of Education. [PA's ESSA Consolidated State Plan](#) was approved on January 18, 2018.

The plan describes numerous areas of the state education system governed by ESSA including long-term goals, academic assessments, accountability, supports for all students, and supports for educators. This Advisory focuses on several of the new and existing initiatives included in Pennsylvania's Plan to improve educator supply, quality, and distribution.

Initiatives to **increase the supply of educator candidates** include the following:

1. **K-12 Educator Pipeline.** The program would provide funds and support to secondary schools that implement curriculum which encourage exploration in teaching careers. It would also support the development of teaching academy magnet high schools across the state.
2. **Paraprofessional Pathway Program.** Utilizing ESSA funds to support district/preparation program partnerships, PDE would foster pathways to certification for people working as paraprofessionals.

Initiatives to **support and enhance quality teaching practices** include the following:

1. **Supports for English Learners and Students with Disabilities.** Teacher preparation programs must offer nine credit hours, or 270 hours in training on accommodations and adaptations for students with special needs. These hours must include instruction in literacy and cognitive skills development for students with disabilities plus three additional credits, or 90 additional hours, addressing instructional needs of English learners.
2. **Teacher and Principal Clinical Residency Programs.** PDE will use ESSA funds to foster partnerships between districts and educator preparation programs. The parameters will require at least one year of clinical experience in the programs and emphasize the importance of the educators living and working in the communities that they serve.

¹ For an overview of ESSA and the PA state plan, see PSEA's Advisory, [The Every Student Succeeds Act: Pennsylvania's Consolidated Plan](#).

3. **Supporting Teacher Leaders.** PDE plans to lead an effort to develop teacher leader standards that will serve as the foundation to build and implement new models of teacher-leadership.
4. **Enhancing the Standards Aligned System Portal (SAS).** PDE will continue to utilize the SAS portal to provide educators with support and information related to standards, assessments, curriculum frameworks, instruction, instructional materials/resources, and safe and supportive schools.

Initiatives to **improve the distribution of teachers to schools and districts that need them the most** include the following:

1. **Educator Clearinghouse.** Pennsylvania will connect educators with employment opportunities by expanding the Teacher Information Management System (TIMS) to make real-time information about job openings available to credentialed educators across the state.
2. **Educator Preparation to Serve in High-Need Schools and Communities.** Through the Troops to Teachers federal grant, this program will prepare at least 50 veterans to teach in critical shortage areas in hard-to-staff schools.
3. **Identification of Teacher Shortages and Underserved Communities.** To help identify statewide teacher shortages, PDE gathers annual data on district shortages including data by subject area and geographical region (rural, urban, suburban). Certification candidates teaching in underserved, low-income communities are eligible for scholarships to help complete coursework and reduce student loans through the federal TEACH Grant.
4. **Ensuring Equitable Access to Effective Educators.** Pennsylvania has developed the [State Plan for Ensuring Equitable Access to Excellent Educators for All Students](#) which identifies several equity gaps and root causes that prevent students from accessing excellent educators. In consort with the ESSA plan, PDE will work with education stakeholders to implement this plan.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education will continue to refine its definition of an effective teacher and identify appropriate data to measure equitable distribution of effective teachers. Eventually, data collected in Pennsylvania's Teacher Information Management System (TIMS) will align with the new definition of effective educator. ESSA requires the state to report annually on the percentage of ineffective, out-of-field and inexperienced teachers serving in Title I buildings and in each LEA.²

In the Plan, PDE also proposes the following initiatives to **improve educator supply, quality, and distribution**:

1. Coordinating ongoing meetings between Pennsylvania's approved traditional and nontraditional teacher and principal preparation programs and human resource personnel in Pennsylvania LEAs to better align the supply of teachers and principals with local school needs.

²This effort is related solely to ESSA's equitable distribution of effective educators and does not relate in any way to Pennsylvania's teacher evaluation system.

2. Assisting Pennsylvania's poorest and highest minority schools in developing "grow your own" educator programs.
3. Implementing pilot projects to improve mentoring and induction programs to better meet the needs of teachers and other school staff.
4. Convening teacher preparation programs and LEAs to identify and share effective strategies for supporting and retaining teachers who are teaching in Pennsylvania's poorest and highest minority schools.
5. Promoting effective strategies for nurturing a safe, positive school climate that is conducive for teaching and learning.
6. Convening facilitated workgroups to review and revise Pennsylvania's secondary certification program guidelines.

For More Information

For more information on every aspect of ESSA, visit PSEA's [ESSA Resource Page](#), and the [Pennsylvania Department of Education's ESSA webpage](#). For information about statewide ESSA programs and policies related to teacher supply, quality, and distribution, PSEA members may contact Brad Hull (bhull@psea.org) in PSEA's Education Services Department. Members with questions about district-specific efforts to improve educator supply, quality, or distribution should contact their local UniServ Representative.

