

ESSA Notes



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February 2, 2017

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MDE Team Seeks Expert Input on State Plan

A team of MDE staff working on Michigan’s ESSA plan—along with representatives of 17 other states—recently had opportunity to participate in a “Critical Friends” review of the state’s draft ESSA plan. The meeting, convened by the Council of Chief State School Officers, included more than 90 education and policy experts from across the country who were on hand to review and provide feedback to strengthen each state’s plan.

Key questions were asked by topical experts, helping MDE staff to clarify related sections of the draft plan. Focused discussion on the proposal included integration of early childhood activities and factors under consideration for the new accountability system. Stakeholder engagement, both during plan development and throughout implementation, was also discussed, with Michigan receiving kudos for its efforts thus far.

ESSA Stakeholder Feedback Shapes State ESSA Plan

The feedback provided by hundreds of educators, parents, community members, and others who participated in a set of online ESSA surveys (see the [January 4, 2017 ESSA Notes](#)) is shaping Michigan’s final ESSA State Plan. Respondents have weighed in on recommended elements of Michigan’s draft plan related to five broad areas required by ESSA:

- Accountability
- Assessment
- Supports to Students and Schools
- Supports for Special Populations of Students
- Teacher and Leader Quality

Michigan’s draft plan is expected to be finalized in mid-February, when it will be presented for review by the State Board of Education. It then will be

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ESSA FACTS

ESSA eliminates the “highly qualified teachers” requirements but says teachers must meet the states’ certification requirements.

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made available for another round of public comment for at least 30 days before being finalized and submitted to the U.S. Department of Education by April 3, 2017.

Feedback Highlights from the Public Survey

More than 670 individuals—including educators, parents, community members, and employers—responded to a public survey regarding ESSA themes and recommendations. An additional 230 stakeholders answered detailed questions related to the MDE’s series of Feedback Forums held in November and December 2016.

The MDE is working with their partners to review those survey results. The final plan will represent input received throughout the stakeholder feedback process; from workgroups, committees, focus groups, and surveys, as well as decisions made by the State Superintendent Brian Whiston.

Here are some highlights from the most recent surveys:

- Majorities of respondents to both the general and detailed surveys on accountability supported the identification of low-performing schools every three years (77% and 82% respectively). Under No Child Left Behind, low-performing schools were identified every year.
- The concept of "partnership districts" was supported by most respondents of both the general survey (77%) and detailed survey related to supports for schools and students (91%). The partnership districts model would involve MDE, the district, its school board, the intermediate school district, and others in developing a package of holistic supports. Districts would be identified based on their level of need (i.e., low proficiency/low growth).
- Majorities of survey respondents to the general and detailed surveys on accountability agreed that measures related to access/equity (68%, 69%) and school climate/culture (60%, 65%) should be included

on a transparency dashboard. The transparency dashboard is not a requirement of ESSA, but is a strategy identified within Michigan’s Top 10 in 10 plan to complement the accountability report card by providing additional information about Michigan’s schools and districts.

ESSA Accountability Regulations Paused

In mid-January, the U.S. Department of Education shared additional resources to further support States in transitioning to the ESSA, including [Frequently Asked Questions on Accountability](#) under Title I, Part A and a [resource guide on accountability for English learners](#) in statewide accountability systems.

Since that time, the new administration has delayed until March 21 the implementation of a host of pending federal regulations, which includes regulations detailing how [accountability and state plans](#) will work under the Every Student Succeeds Act. In addition, the departing Obama Administration withdrew the proposed regulations around “Supplement Not Supplant” provisions in ESSA. The Obama administration’s [assessment regulations](#) and its regulations for the [Innovative Assessment Pilot](#) weren’t impacted by the current administration’s order, since those regulations took effect earlier this month.

State Superintendent Brian Whiston and his team have made known his intent to have the MDE continue to move forward with the State ESSA Plan, which reflects Michigan’s vision to become a Top 10 in 10 state. “We do not want to delay progress towards achieving those goals while waiting for the federal context to solidify,” said Deputy Superintendent Venessa Keesler. “The MDE will, of course, adapt as needed, but we want to continue moving forward on this important work.”

Resources

The **Michigan Department of Education (MDE)** has released answers to **frequently asked questions (FAQ)** gathered during our recent stakeholder outreach efforts.

- The [ESSA: Frequently Asked Questions](#) document can be accessed through the **ESSA Resources** tab on the [ESSA web page](#) (www.michigan.gov/essa).
- Each issue of ESSA Notes will also answer selected questions from the FAQ document in our **Questions from the Field** section. New questions can be submitted to MDE-ESSA@michigan.gov.

The **U.S. Department of Education (USED)** has updated its ESSA transition [frequently asked questions \(FAQs\)](#), which is located on the the [U.S. Department of Ed web page](#) (www.ed.gov) This document, also, is updated on a rolling basis.

Questions from the Field

What exactly is the Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA)? Who is on the committee to develop it?

The CNA is envisioned as a universal needs assessment process used across multiple programs, grants, and initiatives statewide. The committee is in the process of being formed.

How can educators or others provide input on CNA process?

The MDE welcomes stakeholders' thoughts and ideas through one of the feedback mechanisms on the [ESSA web page](#) (www.michigan.gov/essa)—click on **Get Involved**. The MDE staff is collecting ideas, and will be developing a mockup that will be released for review and feedback.

What's Happening Now

- MDE leadership is finalizing Michigan's ESSA State Plan, incorporating input and feedback from a vast number of MDE staff and external stakeholders. The plan is expected to be presented for State Board of Education Review in early February, with a public comment period of at least 30 days following soon after that.
- Michigan education leaders continue to monitor decisions and activity in Washington, DC, as the Trump administration brings in new staff and some yet-to-be announced directions.
- Online focus groups for para-educators, teachers, and parents are wrapping up. In all, 53 teachers, 12 para-educators, and 41 parents participated in the 2-day, interactive groups.
 - ♦ One **teacher** group participant had this to say: "Participating in this focus group has been a great experience for me as an educator. I have been teaching for 16 years and I am glad to have shared my thoughts during the past two days. Thank you. Please continue to consider the voice of the educator: whether we are in a public, private, or charter school setting, know that we are doing the best that we can every day to increase student achievement."
 - ♦ From a **parent**: "Make as much data as possible available to parents. Come back to this focus group for more input once it is developed further. Thanks for asking for our input!"
 - ♦ From a **parapro**, addressing which aspect of ESSA excites them most: "I'm encouraged by ESSA's stated goal to help improve schools, when needed. Our students deserve the best and when they are the focus-the sky's the limit!"