



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION

November 29, 2016

Dear Chief State School Officer,

I am writing to update you on the U.S. Department of Education's (Department) continued transition to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The ESSA received overwhelming bipartisan support and presents a historic opportunity to build on key areas of progress for students, families, and educators. Notably, the law reiterates the need for accountability and action to effect positive change in our lowest-performing schools and ensures that vital information about student progress is provided to educators, families, students, and communities. The law also provides States with the opportunity to set expectations for all students that will put them on a path to succeed in college and beyond, with flexibility to design accountability systems that best support this goal.

I am pleased to share that on November 28, 2016, the Department released final regulations to implement the accountability and data reporting requirements under Title I and the State plan provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended by the ESSA. The final regulation and all supporting materials are available at www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/index.html. I appreciate your work to date to implement the ESEA and hope these regulations will support further implementation. I am writing to provide more detail regarding State plans, invite your State educational agency to participate in upcoming webinars, and to request information on your State's intent to submit its consolidated State plan or individual State plans for peer review by one of the two established deadlines in this letter.

The final regulations provide new flexibility for States and districts, a holistic approach to measuring the quality of education, and strong protections for all students to ensure equitable opportunity. You can read more in the Department's Final Regulation: Accountability, State Plans, and Data Reporting [Fact Sheet](#). The regulations also reinforce the ESEA's strong commitment to transparency and meaningful State and district consultation with students, parents, educators, community leaders, and other stakeholders as they implement the new law. The regulations incorporate public comments requesting more time to transition thoughtfully to the new law and expanded flexibility for States in key areas including the selection of indicators and identification of schools in their statewide accountability and support systems. Specifically, each State must identify schools for comprehensive support and improvement no later than the 2018–2019 school year and schools with consistently underperforming subgroups of students for targeted support and improvement no later than the 2019–2020 school year. The Department created a [Timeline for Identification of Schools for Support and Improvement chart](#) for your reference.

As required by the ESEA, to receive Federal funds, each State must submit a consolidated State plan or individual State plans for each of the programs included in the final regulations. A consolidated State plan provides an opportunity for your State to consider how to coordinate and comprehensively plan for the use of Federal funds to support your schools and districts, and may include the following programs: Title I, Part A; Title I, Part C; Title I, Part D; Title II, Part A; Title III, Part A; Title IV, Part A; Title IV, Part B; Title V, Part B, Subpart 2; and the McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act. Today, the

Department also released a [Consolidated State Plan Template](#) that your State must use if you submit a consolidated State plan.

A State may choose to submit its consolidated State plan or individual program plans on **either April 3, 2017, or September 18, 2017**. The Department will conduct a peer review process of submitted State plans after each of the two submission dates. The Department will not review plans on a rolling basis and will consider each plan to be submitted only on one of the two dates above – if your plan is submitted on or before April 3, 2017, it will be considered submitted on April 3, 2017; similarly, if your plan is submitted between April 4, 2017 and September 18, 2017, it will be considered submitted on September 18, 2017. In order to plan for the peer review of State plans, we ask that you indicate by **January 10, 2017**, the date on which you will submit your consolidated State plan or individual State plans. This information may be provided directly to your contact in the Office of State Support (OSS) at the Department at OSS.[State name]@ed.gov (e.g., OSS.NorthCarolina@ed.gov).

Regardless of when your State submits its State plan, your State must submit a set of assurances to the Department by April 3, 2017, in order to receive Federal fiscal year 2017 funds for programs the Department indicated may be included in the consolidated State plan. The Department has also released an [Assurances Template](#) that must be submitted by April 3, 2017.

The Department will host an introductory webinar to provide additional information on the final regulations and offer an opportunity for questions and suggestions for additional guidance or support needed to implement the regulations on December 8, 2016, from 2:00-3:30 pm EST. Please register for the webinar [here](#).

The Department is also planning to release several non-regulatory guidance documents on accountability and school improvement, State plans, and data reporting to provide further clarification on the statutory and regulatory requirements. Beginning in January, the Department will begin a weekly webinar series to assist States in preparing a consolidated State plan. Registration information for these webinars will be available soon and all webinars will be recorded and made available on the Department's website.

Finally, the Department recently launched the State Support Network (the Network), a four-year technical assistance effort, to support States and districts in undertaking school improvement activities. The Network is focused on supporting your efforts to achieve significant improvements in student outcomes, scale up effective systemic approaches and practices within and across States and districts, and identify and share evidence-based activities to facilitate learning across States and districts. For more information about accessing support from the Network, please work with your contact in OSS.

Thank you for your continued efforts and engagement in this important work to ensure that all students have access to an excellent education. We look forward to working with you to implement the ESEA and develop your consolidated State plan.

Sincerely,

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Ary Amerikaner
Deputy Assistant Secretary
Delegated the Duties of Assistant Secretary
for Elementary and Secondary Education

Enclosure

cc: State Title I Directors
State Title II Directors
State Title III Directors
State Title IV Directors
State Assessment Directors
State 21st Century Community Learning Center Directors
State Directors for McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act: Education for Homeless Children
and Youths Program