



**Every Student Succeeds Act
Minnesota State Plan Draft - August 2017
Executive Summary**

Introduction

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed in December 2015 as the nation's new pre-K through grade 12 federal education law. ESSA reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), previously known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB). ESSA replaces NCLB, empowering states to develop systems and policies that place a sharp focus on continuous improvement for all students, ensuring all students have what they need to succeed and that all teachers and administrators have supports in place to deliver on that promise.

ESSA was passed with the intention of giving states and districts additional flexibility and decision-making power. The law requires states to develop plans that address standards, assessments, school and district accountability, support for struggling schools, support for educators, and ensuring a well-rounded education for all students that prepares them for career and college.

Minnesota's plan complements and aligns with our state accountability law, World's Best Workforce. The work together to address educational disparities and inequities identified in our system for students living in poverty, students of color, American Indian students, students with disabilities and any other student, teacher, school or district needing additional support to meet our ambitious goals.

In order to raise achievement and eliminate predictable disparities among student groups, Minnesota's system will be equitable, coherent and meaningfully guided by students, families and educators.

While ESSA is a broad federal law, some of the major focus areas include:

- Eliminating disparities and creating opportunities for better student outcomes.
- Rigorous academic standards that align with the demands of career and college.
- Requirements for annual testing in math, reading and science to provide data on students' mastery of the academic standards.
- Reporting data to the public on outcomes and opportunities for all students both through the accountability system and other measures included in a state report card.
- Accountability systems that use measures to prioritize schools for support.
- State strategies to intervene and support low-performing schools and schools with consistently underperforming student groups.
- Access for all students to effective, in-field and experienced teachers.

Minnesota's North Star

The state plan describes Minnesota's school accountability system, the **North Star Excellence and Equity System**. Polaris—the North Star that Minnesotans know well—is famous for holding nearly still in our vision while the entire northern sky moves around it. The North Star marks the way due north, just as North Star guides our way towards supporting our schools, and the nearly one million students we collectively serve every day.

North Star
Toward excellence and equity.

Equity

Equity is at the center of all work at the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), and throughout the state of Minnesota. The department's mission statement is "Leading for educational excellence and equity. Every day for every one." This is expanded upon in the department's vision statement:

The Minnesota Department of Education provides an excellent education for Minnesota students by implementing Governor Mark Dayton's 7-Point Plan for Better Schools for a Better Minnesota. We strive for excellence, equity and opportunity by focusing on closing the achievement gap, supporting high-quality teaching, using innovative strategies to improve educational outcomes, and ensuring all students graduate from high school well-prepared for college, career and life.

Governor Dayton's 7-Point Plan lays the framework for a long-term vision for pre-K through grade 12 education in Minnesota over the coming years. Fundamental to the plan is the belief that an aligned vision for educational excellence must be created from the ground up. Stakeholder engagement and collaborative partnerships are essential to our success. Building on our strengths is equally important. That concept of taking what is good and making it better provides a clear path for Minnesota to create a strong system of public schools, in which excellent teaching and learning are recognized, supported and celebrated, every day in every school.

Minnesotans want an equitable system. This was evident in the development of our state's NCLB flexibility waiver, and it remains true today. Our ESSA state plan emphasizes meaningful inclusion of all students in the system and upholds the civil rights spirit of ESSA by holding every public school accountable for the outcomes of every student group. During our work on this plan, and with the input of stakeholders, it was important to work from a shared definition of what equity means. Our definition below was written by Voices for Racial Justice, and reviewed and adapted by members of the ESSA committees.

Minnesota's Definition of Education Equity

Education equity is the condition of justice, fairness and inclusion in our systems of education so that all students have access to the opportunity to learn and develop to their fullest potential. The pursuit of education equity recognizes the historical conditions and barriers that have prevented opportunity and success in learning for students based on their race, income, and other social conditions. Eliminating those structural and institutional barriers to educational opportunity requires systemic change that allows for distribution of resources, information and other support depending on the student's situation to ensure an equitable outcome.

Well-Rounded Education

One change important to many Minnesota citizens is an increased emphasis on providing a well-rounded education to all students. Under No Child Left Behind, many districts and schools felt pressure to focus mostly on the subjects that were tested by the state. Under ESSA, Minnesota will do more to ensure each child in every community receives a well-rounded education, preparing them for career, college and life.

While ESSA leaves most of the responsibility for promoting a well-rounded education to states and communities, it does provide a starting-point definition of "well-rounded" education that includes subjects such as reading, math, science, social studies, physical education, world languages and the arts. The law also provides some specific funding for well-rounded education, and Minnesota will build on the law's foundation to promote the use of many of the law's other funds to help all students fully access and benefit from a well-rounded education.

Stakeholder Engagement

The Minnesota Department of Education has worked with a diverse group of stakeholders, including consultation with Minnesota's 11 unique sovereign Tribal Nations, to shape the state's ESSA plan. Engagement has been ongoing since January 2016, and the department has hosted many activities, providing multiple means for Minnesota residents to provide input on the state plan. These activities included topic-specific meetings, public listening sessions, committees for specific areas of the plan, focus groups, social media "Town Hall" meetings, surveys and community meetings.

Over the course of 20 months, MDE engaged with stakeholders at nearly 300 meetings and public events throughout the state to educate, listen and receive critical input from Minnesota citizens.

We asked students, parents, educators, education partners, advocacy organizations, business leaders, community members and members of the public to participate in five committees to delve into specific topics. The five committees were accountability, assessment, English learners, school improvement, and educator quality. The purpose of the committees was to meaningfully involve voices of Minnesotans to support the development of Minnesota's ESSA plan. All meetings were open to the public.

Attendees of these many meetings were encouraged to strive to bridge gaps in understanding, and seek creative resolution of differences in order to integrate the needs of all stakeholders. Members were encouraged to build consensus on options by considering and including the perspectives and needs of all stakeholder groups. Members raised, reflected on, and found equitable solutions throughout the process.

The shared work reflects a vision of an aligned, pre-K through grade 12 education system where all children succeed. In order to raise achievement and eliminate predictable disparities between student groups, a guiding principal of the engagement work was an unwavering commitment to ensuring that Minnesota's system be equitable, coherent and meaningfully guided by students, families and educators.



Standards and Assessments

ESSA requires that states continue to test the same grades and subjects. This means that students will continue to take reading and math tests in grades 3-8 and once in high school, and they will take science tests in grades 5 and 8 and once in high school.

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States are required to provide a quality assessment system that assures students receive a fair, equitable and high-quality education. Each state must provide evidence that it has adopted challenging academic content standards and academic assessments. **Under ESSA, Minnesota will continue to administer the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA) and Minnesota Test of Academic Skills (MTAS). These assessments are aligned to the most recent version of Minnesota's Academic Standards.**

ESSA also requires that states define what languages other than English are spoken by a significant portion of the state's student population and describe a timeline for how states will develop tests in those languages. **Minnesota stakeholders determined that Spanish, Somali and Hmong are present to a significant extent in the participating student population. Beginning in 2018, Minnesota will provide translations of academic words throughout the math and science MCAs in these languages.**

Minnesota will continue to test the progress toward English language proficiency of English learners in the domains of reading, writing, listening and speaking.

Going forward, stakeholders will convene to develop considerations for Minnesota's next assessment system. Additionally, a process will be established for the state to consider a nationally recognized high school assessment in place of the high school MCAs.



Accountability

Minnesota's accountability system for schools will identify and prioritize schools for support. It holds every school in the state accountable for the performance of every student group. It is less punitive than the system required by No Child Left Behind, emphasizing partnership and improvement instead of a limited set of consequences. Accountability indicators are publicly reported for all schools and disaggregated at the student group level. See the next page for details on each of Minnesota's accountability indicators.

Statewide Long Term Goals

ESSA asks states to describe ambitious long-term goals which include measurements of interim progress toward meeting the goals for all students and separately for each student group.

Minnesota's goals are:

- **In both reading/language arts and math, the state's achievement rate will be 90, with no student group below 85, by 2025.**
 - **Reach a third grade reading/language arts achievement rate of 90, with no student group below 85, by 2025.**
 - **Reach an eighth grade math achievement rate of 90, with no student group below 85, by 2025.**
- **Four-year graduation rate will be 90 percent, with no student group below 85 percent, by 2020.**
- **The progress toward English language proficiency goal will be set this summer once this year's ACCESS 2.0 results are in and a baseline can be calculated.**
- **Consistent attendance goal will be 95 percent overall, with no student group below 90 percent, by 2020.**

Identifying Schools for Support and Improvement

Minnesota's accountability indicators will be used to prioritize support for identified schools. This required aspect of ESSA is one part of an overall approach to school accountability. Public reporting of data and efforts to recognize high-performing schools will also be important. Each student group at a school will receive equal weight in order to **meaningfully include all students**.

Under ESSA, any public high school in the state with a graduation rate below 67 percent overall or for any student group will be identified for support.

Minnesota will use a funnel approach that filters schools to find those that are low across all indicators. The process first checks school performance on the academic indicators, including academic achievement, English language proficiency, academic progress and graduation rates, and lastly, the process evaluates every school's consistent attendance rates. Using this funnel approach, Minnesota will identify schools that are the lowest-performing 5 percent of Title I schools in need of support based on low overall performance as well as any public school with individual student groups that are underachieving.

ESSA also requires that states factor test participation into their accountability systems. **In Minnesota, students who do not take the MCAs for their grade will count similarly to students who are not proficient, although they will not be labeled that way in state records or reporting to parents.**

Minnesota's Accountability Indicators

Indicator 1 - Academic Achievement: all schools

An achievement rate using math and reading tests will give points for students in the “meets standards” or “exceeds standards” levels. Any student that does not participate in an assessment, with the exception of medically-exempt students, will count as “not proficient” in the academic achievement indicator calculation.

Indicator 2 - Academic Progress: elementary and middle schools

A transition matrix using math and reading tests will award points for students increasing achievement levels (e.g. moving from “does not meet standards” to “partially meets standards”).

Indicator 3 - Graduation Rate: high schools

The indicator will use a school's four-year and seven-year graduation rates.

Students who drop out after less than half an academic year at a school will be counted at the high school they attended for the most time.

Four-, five-, six- and seven-year rates will be reported on the Minnesota Report Card.

Indicator 4 - Progress Toward English Language Proficiency: all school

A growth index will measure how each English learner scored relative to their individual growth-to-proficiency target on the ACCESS test.

Indicator 5 - School Quality/Student Success: all schools

This new indicator will shift over time as more data becomes available.

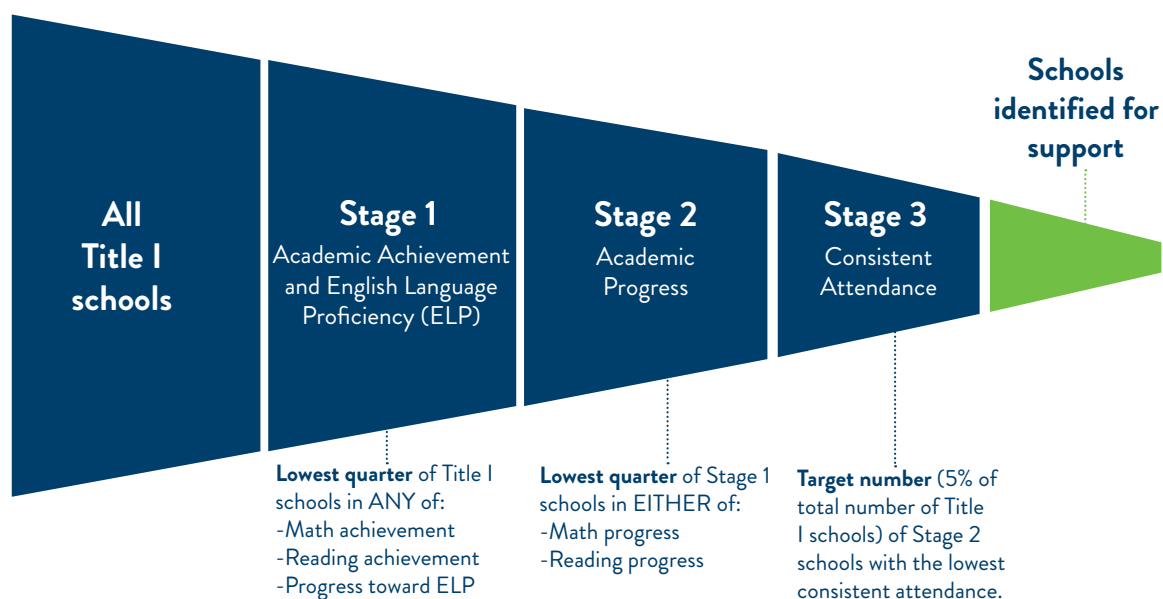
2018: Consistent attendance will be used to identify schools.

2019/2020: Consistent attendance will be used to identify schools. Well-rounded education and career and college readiness data will be separately reported as available.

2021: Consistent attendance, well-rounded education, and career and college readiness data will be used to identify schools.

The Funnel Approach

For each type of support and improvement, the process for identifying schools uses a system that filters schools to find those that need help the most. The example below shows how elementary and middle schools are identified for comprehensive support and improvement.



School Support

For districts with schools identified under the accountability model, Minnesota's Regional Centers of Excellence partner with leadership teams to facilitate school improvement efforts focused on equity for underserved student support groups. The centers provide on-the-ground assistance to districts and schools to create the capacity and conditions that support change and continuous improvement. Minnesota also provides Title I school improvement grants to districts that serve the most significant numbers of identified schools.

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States are required to provide more rigorous interventions for schools identified for comprehensive support and improvement that fail to exit their support and improvement status. **Minnesota will support these schools with an externally facilitated, onsite needs assessment, requirements for the use of Title I dollars to fund improvement activities, and increased requirements for approving and monitoring their support and improvement plans.**

In their plans, states must describe how school improvement resources are being used. **Minnesota will provide support to districts serving identified schools by using school improvement funds and state funds to: (1) make grants to the Minnesota districts serving the highest proportions of schools identified for comprehensive and targeted support and improvement and that have capacity to support school improvement activities in schools; and, (2) make grants to regional educational service agencies—the Minnesota service cooperatives—to serve schools implementing comprehensive and targeted support improvement plans through Minnesota's Regional Centers of Excellence.**

ESSA asks states to describe the technical assistance that will be provided to each district serving a significant number or percentage of schools identified for comprehensive or targeted support and improvement. **Minnesota worked with stakeholders to lay out a theory of action for how the state will approach supports for identified schools, as well as reinforce the focus on eliminating achievement gaps and inequities while improving outcomes for all students. Minnesota will provide differentiated assistance to districts and schools to conduct comprehensive needs assessments, select appropriate evidence-based interventions and strategies, develop and implement school improvement plans, and address resource inequities. Minnesota will grant Title I school improvement funds to the districts serving the most significant numbers of identified schools and will provide direct supports to the remaining districts with identified schools through Minnesota's Regional Centers of Excellence.**

Formula for Success at Minnesota's Regional Centers of Excellence

Minnesota's statewide system of support uses a stage-based framework with schools that incorporates three core support elements:

1. Building and using implementation teams to actively lead implementation efforts.
2. Using data and consistent, frequent feedback loops to drive decision-making and promote continuous improvement.
3. Developing an implementation infrastructure that includes innovation-specific capacity, general capacity and enabling contexts for implementation and continuous improvement.

English Learners

The English learner (EL) population in Minnesota has increased more than 300 percent in the last 20 years. Currently, it is the fastest growing student population in the state. ESSA is an opportunity to ensure additional growth toward proficiency of the Minnesota English learner as well as creating opportunities to meaningfully include and support English learners.

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ESSA asks that states describe how they will develop standard entrance and exit procedures for English learners with timely and meaningful input from districts. **Staff from MDE met with educators and community members throughout the spring of 2017 to work on these procedures. Additional details and guidance, including an updated approach to the home language survey used to identify students as English learners and a more systematic approach to exiting students from EL status will be shared with schools, districts and communities.**

States must also describe how they will help districts meet the state's long term goals for EL progress and help EL students meet the state academic standards. **Minnesota provides technical assistance to all districts receiving state aid for English learners, and districts only need to have one EL student to qualify. Districts serving a large number of ELs with limited and/or interrupted schooling, long-term English learners, or a large number of ELs and ELs with low rates of growth toward proficiency will receive enhanced technical assistance. Schools also have access to EL specialists at the Regional Centers of Excellence. In addition to content expertise, these specialists offer an outside perspective on schools' efforts to increase student achievement and can guide and support staff at identified schools through the process of needs assessment, building and strengthening leadership teams, and developing continuous improvement plans.**

ESSA requires that the state monitor the progress of districts receiving Title III funds in helping ELs achieve English proficiency. In the state plan, states must describe how they will do that, and describe the steps that will be taken to help districts whose Title III strategies are not effective. **In Minnesota, all districts applying for Title III EL funds must submit a comprehensive needs assessment based on EL data; progress towards proficiency, and meeting the recommended growth target. Staff at the Minnesota Department of Education review the application and confirm that the district's strategy is based on EL needs and able to be implemented well. Additionally, districts receiving EL funding are annually monitored, where districts are asked to provide evidence and support of critical compliance elements that follow requirements of Title III.**



Educator Quality and Equity in Access

Minnesota will continue to implement strategies and review and publicly report available data to ensure all students have equitable access to experienced and qualified teachers who are teaching in their licensure field. Additional focus will be brought to promoting equitable access to effective teachers and exploring ways to increase teacher diversity so more students have a chance to be taught by teachers similar to themselves.

In the state plan...

ESSA requires that states address how they will ensure that students from low-income families and students of color and American Indian students are not taught more often than their peers by teachers who are ineffective, not fully credentialed or inexperienced. **Minnesota's World's Best Workforce law addresses this by requiring districts and charters to create local equitable access plans to ensure low-income and students of color and American Indian students are not disproportionately taught by inexperienced, ineffective or out-of-field teachers.**

At the state level, **Minnesota will create a statewide equitable access plan, and will provide guidance, training and other resources to support districts and schools in engaging in local equitable access planning.** Districts and schools will be able to use both state and local data in order to identify, document and report local gaps in equitable access.

Minnesota will define "ineffective teacher" as a **teacher who is not meeting professional teaching standards as defined in local teacher development and evaluation systems.**

ESSA also asks how states will use Title II funds in improving the skills of teachers and principals and increasing student achievement. **Minnesota will use these funds to support districts to design and implement teacher leadership, job-embedded professional development, teacher evaluation and performance-based compensation. Additionally, principal networks, communities of practice and other activities focusing on instructional leadership and equity will be provided through the state's use of these funds.**

To improve the skills of teachers, principals or other school leaders to identify students with specific learning needs and then meet those needs, **the Minnesota Department of Education provides a variety of services to improve the skills of teachers, principals and other school leaders in areas such as special education, English learners, gifted and talented education, early learning and reading. Minnesota's Regional Centers of Excellence provide on-the-ground support to identified districts and schools to address challenges and improve the overall skills of teachers and school leaders.**

In improving preparation programs and strengthening support for teachers, principals or other school leaders based on state needs, **Minnesota has a standard process in place for current and new programs, which focuses on a continuous improvement model using internal and external data on processes and results, where data is reviewed and concerns are discussed and focuses on areas where programs should focus their improvement efforts.**

Ensuring a high-quality education workforce

Minnesota has a state law requiring local education authorities to implement local plans to develop and evaluate teachers based on common professional teaching standards and on student outcomes. The teacher development and evaluation law explicitly requires that districts identify teachers not meeting standards, support them to improve and discipline teachers who have not improved after being supported. While the statute provides the criteria that must be met, it is a local control mandate, giving districts and schools the flexibility to design evaluation systems that best meet the needs of their students, educators and communities.

More Programs for Supporting Students and Schools

ESSA funds additional programs aimed at improving overall school experiences, as well as several programs aimed at meeting specific goals and serving specific populations. Many of these programs already operate in Minnesota, and most will experience little to no change under ESSA.

School Conditions

ESSA asks how states will support districts to improve school conditions for student learning, including reducing bullying and harassment incidences, limiting discipline practices that remove students from the classroom, and addressing behavioral interventions that compromise student health and safety. **The Safe and Supportive Minnesota Schools Act (2015) has enhanced the state's capacity to provide assistance to schools in identifying and addressing bullying and harassment, and to help schools implement preventative and positive approaches to discipline. Minnesota also provides districts and schools support on implementing restorative practices and social emotional learning as a central strategy for creating positive climates.**

School Transitions

Under ESSA, states must demonstrate how they will meet the needs of students at all levels making sure they are supported in making successful transitions between schools. **The Minnesota Department of Education has developed several tools and resources including the Minnesota Early Indicator and Response System and the Personal Learning Plans Toolkit to help educators, parents, counselors and administrators to support students throughout school. These tools help adults recognize the unique possibilities of each student and ensure that their plan for school reflects their own unique talents, skills and abilities throughout their growth and development.** Additionally, Support Our Students Grants, provided by the Minnesota Legislature in 2016, help schools hire student support services personnel including licensed school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, school nurses or chemical dependency counselors. These support services personnel are critical to the success of students, and especially those on the verge of dropping out.



Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants

Title IV, Part A of ESSA creates the Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants, which will be small grants awarded to districts to help students access a well-rounded education, experience safe and healthy learning, and benefit from the use of technology in schools. **In working to ensure a well-rounded education for all students, Minnesota will use Title IV, Part A funds to support a quality standards-based education system and increase the access and effective use of technology in instruction. Minnesota will also award subgrants for Title IV, Part A to focus on innovative programs that promote equitable opportunities and outcomes for all students. Priority will be given to programs designed to achieve the following: improved access to academic standards for all students; a collaborative professional culture that supports implementation of standards; and rigorous, multi-disciplinary learning experiences (including health and physical education, the arts, and career and technical education).**

21st Century Community Learning Centers

21st Century Community Learning Centers offer opportunities for academic enrichment for students, and offer families of students served by the centers opportunities for active and meaningful engagement in their children's education. ESSA asks states to describe how they will use funds received under this program, including those funds reserved for state-level activities. **Minnesota will award competitive grants that support the creation of 21st Century Community Learning Centers to increase access to these centers and expand the opportunities they provide. Some of the funds will also be used for state activities such as monitoring and evaluation of programs and activities, outreach, training and technical assistance.**

States must also describe how funding for 21st Century Community Learning Centers grants will be awarded. **Minnesota will use a competitive application and rigorous peer review process for awarding funding. Priority will be given to programs serving high-needs areas and those that are implementing support and improvement activities.**

Rural and Low-Income School Program

Under ESSA, states must provide information on program objectives and outcomes for activities under the Rural and Low-Income School Program, including how the state will use funds to help all students meet the challenging state academic standards. Minnesota targets rural districts, charters, intermediate districts and education cooperatives serving large numbers of low-income students for grants awarded to promote effective implementation of the challenging state academic standards through state and local innovations. Awards are issued annually. The program objective for improved performance by students in rural and low-income schools will be to measure the academic achievement of students as described in the accountability system.

ESSA also asks how states will provide technical assistance to districts and schools to implement these activities. The Minnesota Department of Education will provide assistance in implementation, program activities and fiscal decisions. Ongoing assistance may be offered through webinars, conference presentations, one-on-one support and more.

Education for Homeless Children and Youth

States must describe the procedures they will use to identify homeless children and youth in the state to assess their needs. **In Minnesota, every school district is required to have a McKinney-Vento liaison that is actively working to identify, work with, and advocate for homeless or highly mobile students.**

ESSA also asks states to describe programs for school personnel to heighten their awareness of the specific needs of homeless children and youth, including runaway and homeless children and youth. **Minnesota provides a variety of training and technical assistance to districts and schools such as presentations, briefs, surveys and recommendations. Topics include identifying homeless and highly mobile students early to remove barriers to enrollment, ensuring eligible children and families are notified of programs like School Readiness, early learning scholarships and more.**

States must also describe how they will make sure that homeless children and youth have access to a variety of programs, including public preschool programs and secondary education and support services, and describe the steps taken to remove barriers to academic and extracurricular activities, including magnet school, summer school, career and technical education programs, advanced placement, online learning, and charter school programs. **Minnesota offers extensive technical assistance to districts and schools to ensure they are trained in assessing policies that may pose barriers to any eligible student's participation in any activity. This technical assistance from the state is ongoing, including when new policies and procedures are being developed.**

Education of Migratory Children

Under ESSA, states must describe how they will address the needs of migratory children, including preschool migratory children and migratory children who have dropped out of school. **Minnesota identifies the unique educational needs of its migratory children through a regularly conducted statewide migrant comprehensive needs assessment, service delivery plan and evaluation cycle. The process begins with the comprehensive needs assessment, which then informs the development of the service delivery plan and continues on through the implementation and program evaluation. The results of the comprehensive needs assessment guides the overall design of the Minnesota Migrant Education Program on a statewide basis, and the Migrant Education Program assures that the findings of the comprehensive needs assessment are folded into the comprehensive state plan for service delivery.**

Prevention and Intervention Programs for Neglected, Delinquent or At-Risk Children and Youth

Under ESSA, states must provide a plan for assisting the transition of children and youth between correctional facilities and locally operated programs. **The Minnesota Department of Education will continue to collaborate with and support the Minnesota Department of Corrections and locally operated programs to ensure successful and seamless transitions for students. Programs and plans such as the Personal Education Plan, College and Career Readiness/Job Training, Assistance with Locating Transition Program/Services, and Check & Connect are part of this system.**

States must describe the established program objectives and outcomes that will be used to assess the effectiveness of the Title I, Part D prevention and intervention programs in improving the academic, career and technical skills of children in the program. **Minnesota's objectives and outcomes describe how students in the program will: 1) improve achievement in reading and mathematics; 2) accrue course credits and are on track to graduate; 3) make successful transition to a regular program or other educational program; and, 4) participate in postsecondary education, career and technical education, or employment. Minnesota utilizes a variety of methods to assess the effectiveness of the program objectives and outcomes.**

