

Preliminary Decisions

The Minnesota Department of Education has worked with a diverse group of stakeholders—at more than 300 meetings—to shape Minnesota’s ESSA plan, which will be submitted to the U.S. Department of Education in September 2017. **The work reflects a vision of a well-rounded education system where all children succeed.** In order to raise achievement and eliminate predictable disparities between student groups, **Minnesota’s system must be equitable, coherent and meaningfully guided by students, families and educators.**

Accountability Indicators

The indicators below 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.**

Indicator 1 - Academic Achievement: all schools

An achievement index using math and reading tests will give half points for students in the “partially meets standards” achievement level and full points for students in the “meets standards” or “exceeds standards” levels.

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., from “does not meet standards” to “partially meets standards,” or “partially meets standards” to “meets standards” or “meets standards” to “exceeds 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 also be separately reported on the Minnesota Report Card.

Indicator 4 - Progress Toward English Language Proficiency: all schools

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

2018: Chronic absenteeism will be used to identify schools.

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

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

High School Accountability

High schools with a four-year graduation rate below 67 percent overall or in any individual student group will be identified for support.

Assessments

While continuing to administer annual assessments consistent with federal law, Minnesota will move forward with assessment workgroups in 2017 and 2018 to take advantage of flexibilities provided by ESSA.

- For 2017-18, use Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA) for reading and math in grades 3-8 and once in high school, and science in grades 5, 8 and once in high school.
- Establish a process for the state to consider a nationally recognized high school assessment in place of the high school MCA.
- Develop considerations for Minnesota’s next assessment system.

School Improvement

Primary supports for identified schools will be provided through **onsite coaching, professional development and networking opportunities** from Minnesota's Regional Centers of Excellence. Support will be differentiated for Minneapolis and St. Paul Public Schools through grant funds and direct technical assistance.

When **prioritizing allocation of resources**, factors such as demographics, teacher mobility, principal mobility and funding will be considered.

Once identified, schools will be allowed to use the year of identification for **comprehensive needs assessment, identification of evidence-based practices, and planning**. Years two and three of identification will focus on implementation.

The state will provide a list of evidence-based practices that schools and districts can choose to include in support and improvement plans for identified schools. The state will also help schools conduct needs assessments, identify inequities, and select appropriate practices.

Supports for high schools identified for comprehensive support and improvement because of low graduation rates will include the use of data to **identify and support students at risk of dropping out**.

The state will review, approve and monitor support and improvement plans for identified schools.

Schools that fail to meet exit criteria will be further supported with an externally facilitated, onsite needs assessment, requirements for use of Title I dollars to fund improvement activities, and increased requirements for approving and monitoring their support and improvement plans.

Schools will no longer be required to set aside 20 percent of Title I funds for school improvement, but districts will be required to **demonstrate that schools' support and improvement plans are adequately resourced**.

English Learners

When identifying schools for improvements, **former English learners (EL) will be included in a school's EL student group for four years after exiting EL status**.

Recently arrived English learners will be tested in all subjects during their first year of enrollment, but results from the state reading test will not be used to identify schools for improvement. Academic progress in reading will be included in the student's second year of enrollment, and academic achievement in reading will be included in their third year of enrollment.

Continue development of statewide standardized procedures for identifying and exiting English learners from language instruction educational programs.

Educator Quality

Districts will create and regularly update local plans for **ensuring low-income students, students of color and American Indian students have equitable access to effective, experienced and in-field teachers** as well as to **improve student access to teachers of color and American Indian teachers**.

The state will regularly update the state plan for ensuring equitable access to effective, experienced, in-field and diverse teachers.

The state will **define "ineffective teacher" as a teacher who is not meeting professional teaching standards as defined in local teacher development and evaluation systems**. These data may only be used locally to inform equitable access plans. The state will continue to collect data on teacher experience, licensure and assignment as part of state equitable access planning and public reporting.

State activities for increasing teacher effectiveness with Title II will include **teacher leadership, job embedded professional development, teacher evaluation and performance-based compensation**.

Principal networks, communities of practice and other professional development and technical assistance activities focusing on instructional leadership and equity will be provided through the state's use of 3 percent of Title II funds.

Decisions yet to be determined:

- Minimum number of students required for a student group to be included in accountability reporting (also referred to as "cell size").
- Statewide long-term goals and interim measures of progress for academic achievement, graduation rates and progress toward English language proficiency.
- Methods to identify:
 - At least the bottom 5 percent of schools.
 - Schools with any student group performing similarly to the bottom 5 percent of schools.
 - Schools where one or more student groups are consistently underperforming.
- Design differentiated supports for identified dropout recovery and credit recovery high schools.
- Option to use up to 3 percent of the state Title I, Part A allocation for grants to districts and charters to pay for direct student services such as academic courses not offered at the school, credit recovery options and advanced or college credit bearing courses.
- By 2018:
 - Process to recognize high-performing and gap-closing schools as well as the strategies to share practices in these schools.
 - Meaningful reporting of data, including accountability indicators, using a dashboard.