



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

August 5, 2016

Dear Colleague:

Thank you for the important work you are engaged in to transition to the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA). I am writing today to provide information about technical assistance and resources available to you to support your State's transition to the ESSA over the next few months. The new law provides time and authority for the U.S. Department of Education (Department) to work with State and local partners to ensure a smooth and orderly transition to ESSA.

During this time, your needs for technical assistance will likely evolve. To support this transition, my office is committed to continuing to provide technical assistance that is timely, relevant, results-oriented, and based on individual State needs and context.

The Regional Comprehensive Centers and national Content Centers are available to support your State's orderly transition to the ESSA. I encourage you to work with your Regional Comprehensive Center liaisons to identify current or emerging needs for transition support. This fall, the Department expects to receive technical assistance plans from Regional Comprehensive Centers and national Content Centers that outline ongoing or planned transition support for fiscal year 2017.

We are committed to working with our network of Comprehensive Centers, other Department-funded technical assistance providers, the Council of Chief State School Officers, and partner organizations to address common challenges and provide opportunities to exchange ideas and promising practices with your colleagues across the country. The Department's Office of State Support (OSS), working closely with these partners, will use the existing quarterly progress check calls and peer group conversations over the coming months to identify your most pressing questions and transition challenges to understand where more support is needed. This will enable us to effectively direct content expertise and resources where it is needed most to address State needs and implementation challenges.

OSS is also pleased to announce the launch of the State Support Network, a new, four-year technical assistance effort focused on supporting States and districts as part of the school improvement activities authorized under ESEA, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act, and, after the transition, the ESSA. The purpose of the State Support Network is to support 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 effective practices to facilitate learning from States, districts and others to support school improvement.

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The U.S. Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.

The State Support Network will provide individualized and differentiated support based on State and district needs, utilizing national experts and other support organizations to help develop and execute technical assistance strategies with respect to school improvement. As we stand up this new initiative, we will look to you for input on what supports will be most critical to assist your transition in the next year.

The Department is ready to support your work over this transition year and continues to develop resources to supplement our technical assistance efforts detailed above. States must continue to carry out the activities, outlined in the ESSA transition [Dear Colleague Letter](#) (issued January 28, 2016), that remain most relevant during this transition, including, for example, continuing to provide interventions in certain schools and to implement the State's Educator Equity Plans. As the President noted in his Testing Action Plan last fall, we also encourage all States to consider how to ensure all State and district assessments align with principles of fewer and smarter assessments, including that they are: 1) high quality, 2) worth taking, 3) time-limited, 4) fair, 5) transparent, 6) just one of multiple measures, and 7) tied to improved learning. In February, we provided additional guidance for how existing Federal funds can support this work. Information about the Testing Action Plan, and that funding guidance. We also encourage State educational agency leadership to begin engaging with stakeholders about how to best implement the ESSA. Secretary King recently issued a [Dear Colleague Letter](#) with recommendations and resources to assist States as they begin engaging stakeholder groups this summer.

The Department has announced proposed regulations for several areas of the ESSA. The Department went through the process of negotiated rulemaking this spring on two issues in Title I, Part A of the ESEA, as amended by the ESSA: assessments and supplement-not-supplant. Additionally, on May 31, 2016, the Department published in the *Federal Register* a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) that includes proposed regulations regarding statewide accountability systems under Title I, data reporting under Title I, and State Plans under ESEA. On July 11, 2016, the Department published proposed regulations regarding statewide assessment requirements under [Title I, Part A](#) and the innovative assessment demonstration authority under [Title I, Part B](#). The public is invited to comment on the additional proposed regulations on or before September 9, 2016 at <https://federalregister.gov/a/2016-16124> and <https://federalregister.gov/a/2016-16125>, respectively.

The Department is working to provide non-regulatory guidance on many provisions in the ESSA. We have already provided non-regulatory guidance on the ESSA's provisions related to students in foster care and homeless children and youth, available at: <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/index.html>. In releasing that guidance, we announced that we will be releasing additional guidance under ESSA for early learners; English learners (Title III); preparing, training, and recruiting high quality teachers and principals (Title II); and student support and academic enrichment (Title IV). In addition to guidance on these topics, the Department is still reviewing comments and feedback from the field to determine what, if any, additional guidance is a priority for implementation of the law in the 2017–2018 school year.

While we will continue to seek input on other areas where guidance and technical assistance would be helpful, the Department does not plan to propose regulations on any other areas of the new law this year. As the Department continues to analyze the ESSA, we will provide additional information at: www.ed.gov/essa.

We will share more information on additional technical assistance opportunities in the coming months. As always, we encourage you to work with your OSS State contacts or contact ESSA.Questions@ed.gov with any specific questions that you might have around the ESSA. If you have additional questions about upcoming opportunities for technical assistance, please contact Danielle Smith, Team Lead, Technical Assistance Functional Support in the Office of State Support, at: danielle.smith2@ed.gov and Kim Okahara, Team Lead, Technical Assistance in the Office of School Support and Rural Programs at: kim.okahara@ed.gov.

Thank you for your continued commitment to ensuring improved educational opportunities for all students. I look forward to continuing to support your efforts to responsibly transition to the ESSA as we focus on the work ahead.

Sincerely,

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Ann Whalen
Senior Advisor to the Secretary
Delegated the Duties of Assistant
Secretary for Elementary and Secondary
Education

cc: State Title I Directors
State Title II Directors
State Title III Directors
State Assessment Directors
State School Improvement Grant Directors
State Equity Directors