
FEDERAL ROLE IN EDUCATION

KEY ISSUES

The majority of decisions on public education are made at the state and local levels, but the federal government does contribute resources to North Carolina's public school system. Although it fluctuates year-to-year, about 11% of North Carolina's education comes from the federal government.¹

In December 2015, President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) into law, reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) for the first time since 2001 when No Child Left Behind was signed into law.

OVERVIEW

In the United States, it is the responsibility of states and communities to establish schools, develop standards and curricula, set graduation requirements, and determine the logistics of school governance. While education policy is mostly determined by state and local administrative units, the federal government plays an important role in funding, overseeing, and developing education policies. The federal government currently provides about 11% of the funding to schools in North Carolina in the forms of grants and recurring support.

Much of that funding is channeled through the US Department of Education, but portions of it come through the Department of Health and Human Services (Head Start Program) or the Department of Agriculture (School Lunch Program). Generally speaking, these funds are targeted to areas of highest need. Allocating federal funding in a targeted way has allowed the U.S. Department of Education to become an "emergency response system," to fill in funding gaps between state and local support in areas of highest need. The role of the federal government in education is minimal when compared to the state and local roles, but the federal government does play an important role in guiding and overseeing education on a national scale.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The U.S. Department of Education was created in 1867 and became a Cabinet level agency in 1980. The Department's mission is to promote student achievement by ensuring equal access and developing efficient school systems. The chief tasks of the U.S. Department of Education include:

- Establishing, allocating, and monitoring federal financial aid programs for education
- Collecting data on schools nationwide
- Focusing national attention on key educational issues
- Prohibiting discrimination and ensuring equal access to education²

FEDERAL PROGRAM MONITORING AND SUPPORT SERVICES DIVISION

The NC Department of Public Instruction (NC DPI) houses the Federal Program Monitoring and Support Services Division, which provides oversight of state and local programs to ensure compliance with federal regulations and to guard against waste, fraud, and abuse. The division oversees federal programs such as

¹ Highlights of the North Carolina Public School Budget , February 2018. Available at <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/docs/fbs/resources/data/highlights/2018highlights.pdf>

² An Overview of the U.S. Department of Education. Available at <https://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/focus/what.html>.

Title I (discussed in more detail below), Title IV, the Rural Education Achievement Program, and Homeless Education. This division monitors the allocation of federal funds to ensure that such funds contribute to student achievement and progress. The Division is subdivided into two sections: the Program Monitoring Section, which works to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to access a high-quality education; and the Support Service Division, which aids LEAs in preventing violence and illegal substance abuse at schools to ensure a safe and healthy learning environment for students.³

RACE TO THE TOP

North Carolina received one of 12 federal Race to the Top (RttT) competitive grants in 2010, bringing nearly \$400 million to the state's public school system over a four year period. The RttT grant was designed to spur public school innovation and was awarded to states with promising plans and concrete goals toward school improvement.

This funding enabled North Carolina to remodel our state system through the READY initiative, an ambitious plan to increase student achievement, close achievement gaps and continue to increase the number of career- and college- ready graduates by making sure every student has an excellent teacher.⁴

TITLE I: IMPROVING ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF THE DISADVANTAGED

Title I provides financial assistance through state educational agencies (SEAs) to local educational agencies (LEAs) and public schools with high numbers or percentages of poor children to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic content and student academic achievement standards.

Schools enrolling at least 40 percent of students from poor families are eligible to use Title I funds for schoolwide programs that serve all children in the school. Schools with poverty rates below 40 percent, or those choosing not to operate a schoolwide program, offer a "targeted assistance program" in which the school identifies students who are failing, or most at risk of failing, to meet the state's challenging performance standards, then designs, in consultation with parents, staff, and district staff, an instructional program to meet the needs of those students. Both schoolwide and targeted assistance programs must be based on effective means of improving student achievement and include strategies to support parental involvement.

Title I reaches about 1.5 million students enrolled in both public and private schools in North Carolina. Title I funds may be used for children from preschool age to high school, but most of the students served (65 percent) are in grades 1 through 6; another 12 percent are in preschool and kindergarten programs.⁵

NATIONAL TITLE I DISTINGUISHED SCHOOLS PROGRAM

The National Title I Distinguished Schools program recognizes exemplary Title I schools that hold students to high standards and demonstrate exemplary school effectiveness in:

- Teaching and learning based on the approved state curriculum,
- Use of research-based instructional strategies,
- Opportunities provided for all students to achieve,
- Established partnerships with parents, families, and the community,

³ NC DPI, Federal Program Monitoring. <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/program-monitoring/>.

⁴ NC DPI, NC Race to the Top. Available at <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/rttt/>.

⁵ NC DPI, Title I. Available at <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/program-monitoring/titleIA/>.

- Implementation of sustained research-based professional development, and
- Innovation and modeling for other schools.

Selected schools are recognized in one of two categories. Schools in the Sustained Achievement category are recognized for showing a high (at least 80 percent) level of student proficiency in reading and mathematics and making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for the most recent two years. Schools in the Closing the Achievement Gap category are recognized for making significant progress in closing the achievement gap between student groups.

Since 1996, North Carolina has recognized Title I schools through this program, sponsored by the National Title I Association. Each year two North Carolina schools are recognized at the national level.

HISTORICAL FEDERAL LEGISLATION

ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1965 as part of the “War on Poverty” program. ESEA has been the most far-reaching federal legislation affecting education passed at the national level. The bill aims to narrow the achievement gaps between students by allocating funding for primary and secondary education, emphasizing equal access to education, and establishing high standards and accountability. The act was originally authorized through 1965; however, the government has reauthorized the act every five years since its enactment until 2001. The current reauthorization of ESEA is the Every Student Succeeds Act, signed in December 2015.

Below are the main provisions of the original ESEA and a few of the earliest additions to the act.

- Title I—Financial Assistance To Local Educational Agencies For The Education Of Children Of Low-Income Families
- Title II—School Library Resources, Textbooks, and other Instructional Materials
- Title III—Supplementary Educational Centers and Services
- Title IV—Educational Research And Training
- Title V—Grants To Strengthen State Departments Of Education
- Title VI—General Provisions
- New Titles Created by Early Amendments to 1965 Law
- **1966 amendments (Public Law 89-750)**
- Title VI - Aid to Handicapped Children (1965 title VI becomes Title VII)
- **1967 amendments (Public Law 90-247)**
- Title VII - Bilingual Education Programs (1966 title VII becomes Title VIII)

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

MAJOR POLICY PROVISIONS OF NCLB

On January 8, 2002, President George W. Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 into law, which reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act at that time. The major focus of the legislation was to raise academic standards for all students and to hold states accountable for student performance. NCLB was based on four principles of President George W. Bush's education reform plan:

1. Stronger accountability for results
2. Expanded flexibility and local control

3. Expanded options for parents
4. Emphasis on teaching methods that have been proven to work

NCLB mandated that by 2005-06, states must annually test students in grades 3-8 in reading and mathematics and by 2007-08, students must be tested once in elementary, middle, and high school in science. States were also required to participate in the 4th and 8th grade reading and mathematics National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests to provide a common measure of comparison across states. The law required that all students must be proficient on state assessments by 2013-14.

FLEXIBILITY AND NCLB WAIVERS

In May 2012, North Carolina was granted flexibility waivers from many of the NCLB provisions. Waivers granted by the U.S. Department of Education made significant changes to North Carolina’s implementation of ESEA’s requirements especially in the areas of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), parent notifications, public school choice and Supplemental Educational Services. This flexibility allowed North Carolina’s public school system to move forward with strengthened College and Career Ready expectations for all students, new ways to hold Title I schools accountable for students' academic proficiency, and new initiatives to support effective instruction and leadership. Many of the former strict federal requirements regarding AYP and sanctions for schools that do not make AYP were no longer required statewide and were left to the local school districts to address.

With the waiver, schools were still measured against Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) calculated and reported under NCLB, but they were more flexible than AYP. AMOs included more specific achievement targets for each student subgroup, guaranteed that at least 95 percent of students participate in testing, established high school graduation rate targets for each student subgroup, and attendance rate targets for K-8 students.

EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT (ESSA)

The Every Student Succeeds Act is the latest reauthorization of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act and was approved by Congress in December 2015. This law provides significant federal support for programs to serve students in kindergarten through 12th grade and replaces the No Child Left Behind legislation. North Carolina and all other states operated under their current federal plan until the final rules were completed for the Every Student Succeeds Act.

General Timeline for Developing North Carolina's Every Student Succeeds Plan

2017	
January–June 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct additional simulations of accountability model and finalize certain decisions • Continue receiving feedback and input on draft plan • Post new versions of draft plan when available. New template issued by the USED in March. New draft plan posted May 1 using new template. • Present to General Assembly Education Committee(s) and meet with legislators and staff • Monthly updates to the SBE

Mid-to-Late June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post draft plan for 30-day public comment period
Mid-to-Late July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review public comments and make appropriate changes to plan • Submit draft plan to Governor’s office for 30-day review period
July and August SBE Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss draft state plan with SBE • Incorporate details in plan that result from actions of the NC General Assembly
September 7, 2017 SBE Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SBE approves the NC ESSA Plan
September 18, 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit state plan to the U.S. Department of Education (USED)
December 13, 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NCDPI receives response letter from USED outlining specific changes needed for revision.
2018	
February 9, 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NCDPI submits revised State Plan under the ESSA to USED • Revised plan is in response to December 13, 2017 letter from USED
May 29, 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NCDPI re-submits states application for funding under ESSA with tracked changes reflecting revisions from February 9, 2018 submission.
June 5, 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U.S. Department of Education approves final draft of North Carolina state ESSA plan.

Source: NC DPI, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Updated March 9, 2016.. Available at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/program-monitoring/succeeds/>.

Some of the aspects of the new law are below:⁶

GENERAL

- ESSA places many limitations on the authority of the U.S. Secretary of Education, including the inability to require additions or deletions to a state’s academic content standards or to prescribe specific goals of progress, specific assessments, weights of measures or indicators, etc.
- The U.S. Department of Education will still need to issue regulations but they cannot add new requirements that go beyond what is required in the law.
- All current ESEA Flexibility Waivers were be null and void as of August 1, 2016.
- Any schools currently identified as priority and focus schools must be maintained for the 2016-17 school year.

ASSESSMENTS AND REPORTING

- ESSA maintains annual assessments in grades 3-8 and high school.
- It reaffirms that states are in control of their standards (which must be challenging) and assessments.
- It eliminates “adequate yearly progress” (AYP) under NCLB.

⁶ NC DPI, Brief Highlights of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Available at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/program-monitoring/succeeds/highlights.pdf>.

- It provides for innovative assessment pilots at the state level so states can research new and improved methods of measuring student progress from year to year. Up to seven (7) states may be selected but that number could increase over time. It will be up to the Secretary of Education to determine the application process and timeline for submission to be one of the pilot states.
- It maintains many reporting requirements including the State Report Card (SRC). SRC data are expanded to include information on homeless students, foster youth, students of parents on active duty in the military, information on acquisition of English proficiency by English Learners and professional qualifications of teachers.

ACCOUNTABILITY

- It sets parameters for a state's accountability system, but gives each state the flexibility to design a school accountability system that best meets the needs of the students in the state.
- The accountability plans must include goals for academic indicators (improved academic achievement on state assessments, a measure of student growth or other statewide academic indicator for elementary and middle schools, graduation rates for high schools, and progress in achieving proficiency for English Learners) and a measure of school quality and student success (examples include student and educator engagement, access and completion of advanced coursework, postsecondary readiness, school climate and safety). Participation rates on the assessments must also be included in the plan.

TEACHER QUALITY

- ESSA gives states the flexibility to work with local stakeholders to determine how educators should be evaluated and supported each year.

DISTRICT AND SCHOOL INTERVENTIONS

- There is no set of required federal sanctions, but interventions used in schools needing assistance and support must be evidence-based.
- States will have to identify, at a minimum, the lowest 5% of Title I schools and high schools with graduation rates lower than 67%. These are the schools that are part of Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI).
- LEAs must develop and implement CSI plans for lowest-performing schools – State must approve plans.
- States also have to identify schools with consistently underperforming subgroups for Targeted Support and Improvement.

FUNDING AND FORMULAS

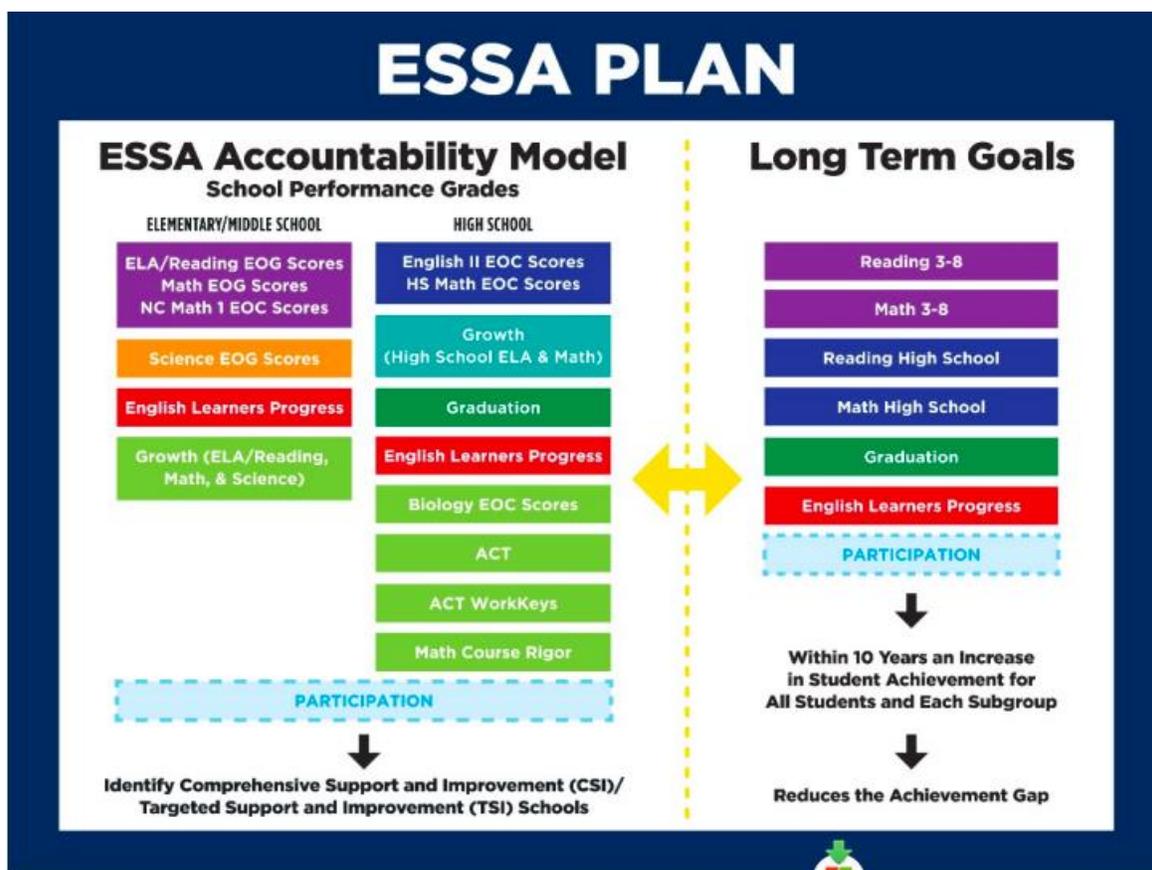
- Eliminates the federal School Improvement Grants (SIG), but allows states to reserve 7% of Title I funds to make grants available to low-performing schools.
- A portion of State Assessment grants will be made available as a separate allocation to states to conduct audits of state or local assessments as a way to reduce redundant assessments.
- Combines some 50 programs into a big block grant under Title IV.
- Authorizes a Preschool Development Grants Program through the Department of Health and Human Services.

For more information on North Carolina's transition to ESSA, visit

<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/program-monitoring/succeeds/essa-faq.pdf>.

HIGHLIGHTS OF ESSA NORTH CAROLINA PLAN SUBMISSION

The Every Student Succeeds Act North Carolina Plan focuses on a number of key educational aspects for K12 education throughout the state, including 21st century learning, student support, rural and low-income school programs, and tools for measurement of success. There are two key features of the state ESSA plan that encapsulate the broader scope of the plan's intent.



SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY

- The state of North Carolina will utilize an A-F Performance Grade Scale for whole-school measurements of success.
 - Note: in the 2017 long session, the General Assembly made the A-F grading system a state law (G.S. 115C-83.15).⁷ The state ESSA plan addresses this law and restates the intent of the state's educational system to utilize this measurement tool.
- Schools will be given a 10 year trajectory for the following subgroups:⁸
 - Number of students who have graduated high school (95% trajectory, all students)

	Baseline Performance (2016) (All Students)	10-Year Goal (2027) (All Students)
Four-Year Cohort Grad. Rate	85.9	95.0

⁷ G.S. 115C-83.15. Available at https://www.ncleg.net/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/PDF/BySection/Chapter_115c/GS_115C-83.15.pdf.

⁸ NC DPI, North Carolina ESSA State Plan. Available at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/succeeds/nc-essa-state-plan-final.pdf>.

- Number of students who are proficient (3+ or higher) in reading and in math

Grade Span/Assessment	Baseline Performance (2016) (All Students)	10-Year Goal (2027) (All Students)	10-Year Improvement
Grades 3-8 Reading	45.8	65.8	20.0
Grades 3-8 Math	47.0	74.1	27.1
High School Reading	51.0	71.3	20.3
High School Math	43.5	73.3	29.8

- Increased performance of students as English Language Learners (ELL) to be proficient in the English Language
- NCDPI will report out:
 - The bottom 5% of Title I schools, statewide
 - High Schools that do not meet at least 66.6% graduation rate

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

- Continued use of the Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS)
- Delivery of school support through two coordinations:
 - Service Support Coordination
 - Professional Development Coordination
- Ongoing professional development support for the school leads in critical areas: such as Multi-Tiered Support Services (MTSS) and digital learning competencies.