



Talking Points for ISBE's 2016 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Listening Tour

The Illinois State Board of Education and the Regional Offices of Education are hosting a statewide listening tour on the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which was signed into law by President Obama in December, 2015. ESSA reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the country's primary law governing education. Meetings will be held across the state to provide information on the new legislation and allow interested individuals an opportunity to share their ideas for how ESSA should be implemented in Illinois. The schedule can be found at www.isbe.net/essa.

ISBE ESSA Listening Tour Questions and Talking Points

1. What do we value and how would that be translated into a state plan to improve student achievement for all students?

- Early learning has been highly valued, on a bipartisan basis, in the Illinois educational system for decades by State Board members, governors, legislators, and education leaders.
- ESSA offers more flexibility for prioritizing a state focus on integrating early learning experiences into the state's ESSA plans.
- As IL develops guidance and approaches for spending Title funds, ISBE should clarify that early learning is a permissible use of funds and provide supports to districts on how they can best make use of those Title funds to strengthen early learning and improve linkages between early learning and K-12;
 - Title I funds can be used to improve integration between Head Start and other early childhood providers with early elementary teachers and principals to jointly engage in transitioning children and their families into kindergarten and providing support following kindergarten entry.
 - Title II funds can be used to improve school readiness by supporting the state's redesigned principal preparation programs; these programs focus on supporting effective instruction while emphasizing

early childhood, children with special needs, English Learners and gifted education.

- Title II funds can be used to invest in professional development for leaders that focuses on helping them support teachers to improve practice and quality of instruction in the early grades.
- Title II funds can be used to invest in instructional leaders to facilitate job-embedded professional development.
- Title III funds can be used to improve instructional supports for English Learners and strengthen transitioning dual language learners into kindergarten from Head Start and other early childhood programs.
- In developing a school accountability system, the State Board will be offering a definition of what makes a great school. That definition should include a focus on early learning as the beginning of a coordinated continuum of students into kindergarten and the early grades, and on ensuring that the early elementary grades are an intentional focus of support and improvement efforts.

2. How should student growth factor into the accountability system?

The Ounce of Prevention Fund is not promoting any position on the measurement of student growth in the tested grades of 3rd and above and how that should fit into the state's overall accountability framework. We do support opportunities within the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) for states and local districts to focus on meaningful assessment processes for English Learners and students with learning delays and disabilities. Key principles of that work include:

- Ensuring that IL is using a statewide English language proficiency assessment to provide consistent determinations of each English learner's progress toward English proficiency.
 - ESSA should promote best practices that support bilingualism and biliteracy.
- Supporting the fair measurement of progress for all students by ensuring annual statewide assessments are valid, reliable and of high technical quality so that schools can provide good information on student performance for parents and educators.

3. What do you want to see in a state plan to improve coordinated services to schools and districts?

- Data collection and reporting should be transparent, actionable, easily accessible, timely and should be used to promote equity.
- The state's accountability and support system should set a clear expectation that schools must raise the achievement of all their students and close the equity/readiness gap beginning with high quality early learning and early elementary experiences across the state.
- Identify effective technical assistance providers to study if the new accountability system meets the state's guiding principles and stated goals for improving academic achievement.

4. What do you want to see in a state plan to improve program and services?

- Support, coordinate and integrate professional development opportunities, curricula, assessments, family engagement and instructional practices between early learning and early elementary for principals, teachers and other school leaders with a focus on the developmental progression of early learners through age 8.
 - The state has been building out its system of support for early learning programs through ExceleRate, and the supports for schools should work in harmony with ExceleRate.
 - There is great opportunity for improving instructional practices in the years prior to 3rd grade as the state moves toward collecting more information about children at kindergarten entry through the Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS). The full KIDS is a curriculum-based assessment that provides a professional development opportunity for kindergarten teachers to advance their instructional practices in a developmentally appropriate way. The more we improve the quality of teaching and learning in those years, the more we can do to improve it.
 - The state's frame for improvement should be based on the 5Es, which represents the key elements of success for schools.
 - It's just as important that strong emphasis be placed on improvement in the early years as in the "tested grades" in order to reduce the school readiness gap.

- In particular, the 5Es emphasizes the critical role of leadership and of engaging parents and the community, which is essential to school success.
- Solicit input from teachers, parents and early learning advocates.
- The State Plan should address the needs of homeless children.
 - The plan should include professional development and training for McKinney-Vento liaisons, which include a specific focus on the prevalence and impacts of homelessness on children under the age of five, as well as information on the full continuum of birth-five early care and education programs available for homeless children and families in Illinois and how to connect homeless families to those programs and services.
 - The state plan is required to include procedures that ensure that homeless children have access to public preschool programs administered by the SEA or LEA and should directly address access to community-based programs.
- The state plan should ensure that meeting the needs of children birth to five and their caregivers is included in any planning around social/emotional development and behavioral health to address challenging behaviors in early childhood settings.

For questions related to any of these talking points, please contact Jonathan Doster at jdoster@ounceofprevention.org.