

Supporting Students with Disabilities

What to Learn from Your State's ESSA Plan

Across the country, more than 6.5 million children and youth receive special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).¹⁴ While separate from ESSA, there is now greater alignment between IDEA and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, now ESSA). Under ESSA, states will be responsible for determining assessment flexibility (DLM-AA) — including assessment development consistent with the principles of universal design for learning, and adjusted graduation rates for those taking this assessment — and other programs that support students with disabilities, including: inclusion of extended graduation rate in the accountability system, identification of students with disabilities as a subgroup, and whether to include students formerly with a disability as a separate, additional subgroup.

Guidance for School Improvement

LEAs and schools have a responsibility to support all students, regardless of disability status. All students must be provided the necessary supports, interventions, and accommodations they need to be successful. This means that school administrators, special education teachers, and other school-based coordinators must work in close collaboration with general education teachers, counselors, social workers, and other on-site personnel to ensure that all students are given the supports they require and are treated in accordance with the requirements of their Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

Depending on state decisions, ESSA funding can be used to support students with disabilities in a varied of ways. Schools and districts now have greater opportunity to identify and support the needs of English learners (ELs) and ELs with disabilities through Title I, III, and under IDEA, to emphasize teacher professional development on multi-tiered systems of support and positive behavioral interventions and supports under Title II, and to develop or expand opportunities for improving conditions for teaching and learning (e.g. support for community school partnerships, positive discipline practices, reduction in bullying/harassment) under Title IV.

Under ESSA, LEAs and schools must track and support students with disabilities and ensure that gaps in student academic performance do not persist. Given the number of students included in this group and their varied needs, LEAs and schools should gather and share information about student achievement, classroom and school environments, assessment accommodations, academic and social-emotional growth, and other measures for students with disabilities in order to better address their specific needs. Note that over-representation can be a problem for this group; regular assessment of need and progress is important.

Find Support for this Strategy in ESSA

TITLE I, PART A: Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies

TITLE III, PART A: English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement Act

14. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cgg.asp

Essential Stakeholders

- ✓ Students and families of students with a variety of abilities, including parent groups such as the PTA, Parents Education Network, or the Parent Training Institute
- ✓ Members of the IEP or Child Study team
- ✓ Special Education teachers
- ✓ Social emotional or specialized instructional support personnel
- ✓ School climate or discipline experts (e.g. Center for Restorative Process)
- ✓ Disability rights organizations, advocates, and service providers (e.g. National Center for Learning Disabilities, Council for Exceptional Children)
- ✓ Physical and mental health professionals, including school nurses, psychologists and counselors
- ✓ Data collection agencies (e.g. KidsCount)

Ask the Experts

- ✓ [ESSA Parent Advocacy Toolkit](#) (The National Center for Learning Disabilities)
- ✓ [Tools for ESSA & Students with Disabilities](#) (AIR)

Highlighted Resource

Find Your Parent Center



Supports parent and family resources for students with disabilities, found at parentcenterhub.org/find-your-center.