

Dear Colleagues:

Today President Obama signed into law the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). This new bipartisan law, which will replace the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, is good news for our nation's schools and students. The ESSA includes many of the key reforms we have called on Congress to enact since the beginning of the Administration and that many of you have pioneered in recent years on your own and in implementing ESEA flexibility. It helps to ensure educational opportunity for all students by:

- Holding *all* students to high academic standards that prepare them for success in college and careers.
- Requiring that, when students fall behind, steps are taken to help them, and their schools, improve, with a particular focus on the lowest-performing five percent of Title I schools, high schools with low graduation rates, and schools where subgroups, including students from low-income families, English learners, students with disabilities, and students of color, are falling behind.
- Empowering State and local decision makers to continue to refine their own systems for school improvement.
- Continuing to require annual, comparable statewide assessments, so that parents and educators have the information they need to make sure children are making progress, while encouraging review and elimination of unnecessary tests.
- Establishing as part of the ESEA programs to:
 - Provide more children with access to high-quality preschool – similar to the current Preschool Development Grants program;
 - Spur innovations developed by educators at the local level and evidence-based strategies for high-need students – similar to the current Investing in Innovation (i3) grant program;
 - Encourage States and districts to put in place new supports for teachers and school leaders, including increases in compensation that are based in part on student learning and other measures;
 - Support innovative and evidence-based teacher and leader recruitment, preparation, and development;
 - Support comprehensive wraparound services from early learning to college and career in high-need communities – similar to the current Promise Neighborhoods grant program;
 - Replicate and expand high-performing charter schools for high-need students – similar to the current High-Quality Public Charter School Replication and Expansion grants program; and
 - Provide continued support for magnet schools designed to improve diversity and increase academic achievement.
- Protecting students from low-income families and students of color from being taught at disproportionate rates by ineffective teachers – building on existing State Plans to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators.

We are all taking a moment today to celebrate this momentous step forward and recognize that in the weeks and months to come there is much work to be done. We will work closely with you and your staffs to ensure a smooth transition to this new law. We will work together to develop solutions to the many important policy and implementation decisions that will arise, and will work swiftly to provide answers to the many questions we know you will have. You can find the latest information at www.ed.gov/essa, and can ask questions through your contact in our Office of State Support, or by e-mailing us at essa.questions@ed.gov.

Congress and President Obama have worked together to enact a law that prioritizes both excellence and equity. It is now up to all of us to ensure that it lives up to its promise for America's students and for our future. We are excited to continue building strong Federal-State partnerships under this new law to increase educational opportunity and improve outcomes for all students.

Sincerely,

/s/

Arne Duncan
Secretary of Education

/s/

John B. King, Jr.
Principal Senior Advisor, Delegated Duties of the Deputy Secretary

(12.10.15)