

ESSA Public Input

Summer 2016 Summary



Throughout the Summer of 2016, the Wyoming Department of Education provided opportunities for public input on implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). A press release on June 7 announced an online comment form and five virtual town hall meetings focused on five topics related to ESSA implementation in Wyoming. The online comment form was available from June 7 - September 1 and collected 42 comments. The town halls were conducted from July 7 - August 16 on Standards and Assessment, Teacher and Leader Quality, School Improvement, Accountability, and Federal Funds. The town hall meetings had 116 participants and collected 79 comments. This is a summary of all the feedback collected.

STANDARDS

Most of the comments around standards mentioned the importance of high standards and setting high goals for students, but there was also mention of the need for age appropriate learning, especially in younger grades. The need for students to learn life skills and be ready to join the workforce was also emphasized, and there was mention of the need to properly integrate technology use into the classroom. Teachers expressed a wish for continuity, and several parents asked for a focus on high achieving students and ways to help students who are already proficient continue to grow in their achievement.

ASSESSMENT

Concerns about overtesting students were expressed frequently, especially in regard to how it can take away from classroom time. Several also mentioned they would like less time between when statewide assessments are given and the results are made available. Frustration was expressed around changes in assessment, and the lack of longitudinal data.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Many feel that the accountability model established by the state in 2012 does a reasonable job of measuring school's success, and asked for it to remain stable. Some comments asked for test scores to have less weight in the model, and the growth indicator was mentioned as a strength. Some suggestions for the additional indicators were given in attendance using Average Daily Membership, percent of college/career/military ready following the Delaware model, and climate surveys.

Poll: Which indicator do you think should have the most weight in the accountability model?

- 78% - Growth
- 11% - Achievement
- 11% - Readiness
- 0% - Equity

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

While concern has been expressed about the transition year, most comments were very positive about the school improvement process implemented at the state level, and the comprehensive school improvement plans that are already required. School administrators mentioned that consistency in the accountability model helps them with school improvement.

TEACHER AND LEADER QUALITY

Many respondents asked for consistency in this area, although would like more of the supports schools currently receive. They like the small class sizes, salary amounts, National Board Certification, the large number of teachers with advanced degrees, and the dedication Wyoming teachers have to their students. They would like more state-supported professional development opportunities, stronger networks between districts, and locally controlled evaluation systems that are not connected to standardized testing. While many want to stick with the Highly Qualified certification requirements, some comments were made about allowing flexibility for teachers in STEM, CTE, and Special Education.

Poll: What is the most important issue for Wyoming to address with teacher and leader quality?

- 73% - Teacher and school leader support
- 13% - Development and implementation of teacher and leader evaluation systems
- 7% - Educator training on the use of technology and data privacy
- 7% - Review of state certification, licensure, and tenure systems
- 0% - New reporting mechanisms for teacher and leader quality

FEDERAL FUNDS

There is general excitement about the more flexible use of federal funds under ESSA, especially in regards to teacher training and the implementation of new standards. However concerns almost always accompanied the excitement, especially in regards to new reporting requirements and supplement vs. supplant.

Poll: What concerns you most about the flexible use of federal funds?

- 60% - All of the above
- 20% - Supplement vs. supplant
- 20% - Providing data on effective use of federal funds
- 0% - Additional optional state set-asides
- 0% - Braiding of funding from multiple programs

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

The positive impact of effective school library programs was frequently noted. There were also mentions of the need for community involvement in the public school system, better access to early childhood education, alternative pathways in high school, and the importance of the overall health of students. Overall comments focused on the need for consistency and to allow teachers to do what they were trained to do.