

Washington's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Plan



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PRINCIPAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

Planning with Data, Aligning Curriculum, Improving Instruction, Closing the Gap



The 2015 federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) law provides Washington state and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) a unique opportunity to take a deeper look at the challenges our students face and make systemic change, paving a pathway to success for all students. OSPI collaborated with hundreds of stakeholders to develop a plan that puts Washington students first. The fruit of that labor is the ESSA Consolidated Plan, which is guided by four main principles.

First, the plan emphasizes equity. Every student deserves the opportunity to finish school ready for

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post-secondary aspirations, career, and life. Our plan focuses on breaking down the barriers that can stand in the way of success and supporting districts and schools focus on all student subgroups.

Second, the plan focuses on facilitating an environment of continuous improvement for schools. In our new accountability index, we provide more indicators than ever before. This broadening of measures allows districts and schools to look at school quality as more than just

a student test score. It also provides an incentive to analyze data and find out where and which students are struggling. The data is designed to help districts and schools develop and implement plans that are unique to their schools.

Third, the plan aspires to have every school provide every student with a full support system and access to effective educators and school leadership. The plan outlines our strategy to attract and retain high-quality educators by developing

evidence-based professional development for teachers, principals, and other school leaders.

Fourth, the plan makes it easier for districts to innovate and support their students. Providing flexibility for schools and districts on how they can use state and federal resources is crucial to improving student outcomes. Removing bureaucratic barriers will allow districts and schools to better align funds and focus resources on the unique challenges that face each classroom and each student.

Strategies to achieve these goals are outlined in Washington’s ESSA Consolidated Plan, which we submitted to the U.S. Department of Education on Sept. 18, 2017. The plan is entering the Department of Education’s peer review stage and we expect to receive feedback by the end of the calendar year.

ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

Rarely does a chance present itself to reshape state and federal accountability in such a meaningful

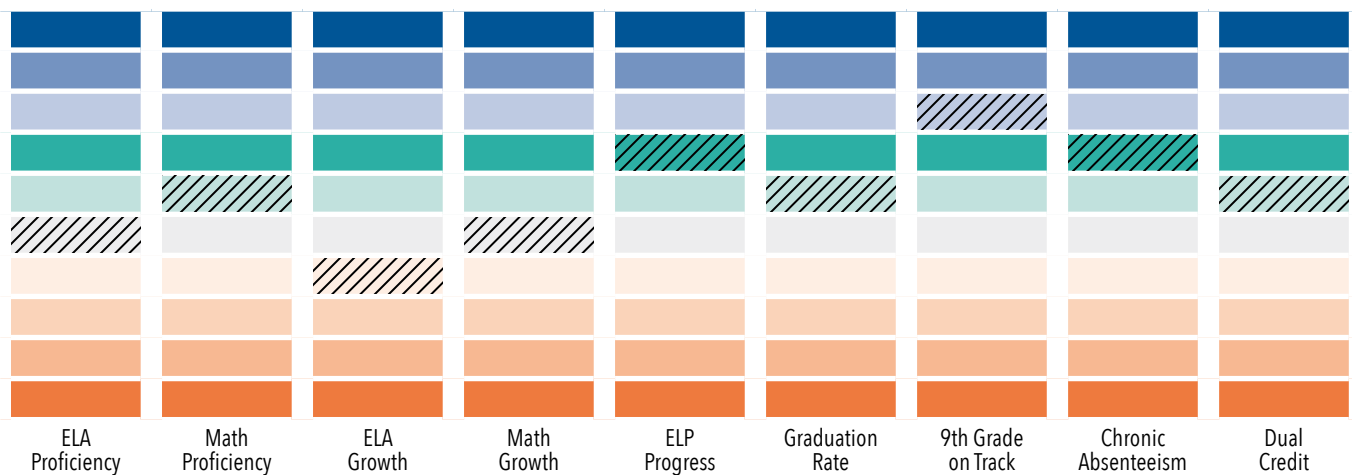
“The plan outlines our strategy to attract and retain high-quality educators by developing evidence-based professional development for teachers, principals, and other school leaders.”

way, and we took that opportunity with great honor. In collaboration with hundreds of principals, administrators, teachers, parents, and policymakers, we created a system that tries to strike a balance between federally-mandated assessments and the other areas that affect children’s success, including attendance and access to dual credit and advanced course-taking. In the end, we created a unified accountability system that aligns state and federal requirements and creates an opportunity to reshape

our OSPI Report Card into a useful data tool for improvement.

OSPI’s new accountability system moves away from a system driven by assessment and graduation to a system that embraces the success of the whole child. In addition to measuring for proficiency in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics through the Smarter Balanced Assessment, schools will now be measured on student growth, graduation rate, English Learner progress, and new School Quality and Student Success (SQSS) indicators. These SQSS indicators were included in ESSA to help communities see a broader picture of school performance. In consultation with stakeholder workgroups, OSPI will be rolling out three SQSS indicators in the 2017-18 school year: Attendance, 9th Graders on-Track to Graduation, and Dual Credit/Advanced Course-Taking. The success of Washington’s students relies heavily on their attending school, making effective transitions from middle to high school, and having opportunities to pursue challenging coursework.

MULTIPLE MEASURES SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY INDEX



The Accountability System will measure schools independently on nine separate indicators. Those nine indicators will be weighted and combined to create a score for Comprehensive Support. The indicators will be available on a data dashboard that can also disaggregate by subgroup, allowing districts to see which subgroups are in need of the most support. Sample scores are shaded above.

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EQUITABLE ACCESS TO EFFECTIVE EDUCATORS

Washington's ESSA Consolidated Plan also works to help close equity gaps that exist in the teaching profession. In Washington's 2015 Educator Equity Plan, OSPI analyzed gaps in access to effective educators. These analyses found that students of color and low-income students are disproportionately more likely to be taught by inexperienced or out-of-field teachers.

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To close these opportunity gaps, OSPI will use Title II, Part A funding to develop initiatives to attract and retain effective educators. Working in collaboration with the Washington Education Association (WEA), OSPI plans to create a Teacher Training Design Team to develop, improve, and implement mechanisms to attract teachers, with an emphasis on effective teachers from underrepresented minority groups and teachers with disabilities. Title II, Part A funding will also be used to help districts develop career opportunities and advancement initiatives, assist in creating programs to mentor new teachers and principals, and much more.

SCHOOL CLIMATE

OSPI is committed to helping improve school climate. The ESSA Consolidated Plan outlines several strategies that OSPI is working on, including the implementation of a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) and the Learning Assistance



Program (LAP) Behavior Menu of Best Practices and Strategies.

OSPI is working with districts to implement MTSS in schools across the state. MTSS is a framework for continuous improvement that's systemic, prevention-focused, and data-informed. In the MTSS framework, three tiers of support are provided to narrowing numbers of students. All students receive Tier 1 services, such as the teaching of behavioral expectations. A smaller number will receive Tier 2 services, like behavioral check-ins. Finally, an even smaller number will receive Tier 3 supports, such as specialized programs or other, more intensive supports.

Additionally, OSPI has worked to end disproportionality in student discipline as required by 4SHB 1541. Changes made to state law include a requirement that long-term suspensions and expulsions must not exceed the length of an academic term, districts must use disaggregated data to understand the full impact of discipline policies on different subgroups, and districts must provide their discipline policies and procedures to students, families, and the community.

SCHOOL TRANSITIONS

One of the struggles many students face, from kindergarten to graduation, is the turbulence associated with new situations and schools. Transitioning successfully between the grade bands is vital to student success. ESSA requires that OSPI support districts in meeting the needs of students transitioning to the middle grades and high school to support their continued success. New measures such as 9th Graders on-Track to Graduation blend with new state laws regarding middle and high school transitions, including recent legislation that elevates and adds support for the High School and Beyond Plan.

The state of Washington has undertaken many initiatives in order to help students make successful transitions, and is using the added clarity and flexibility under ESSA to support students in each grade band:

- Districts have the opportunity to access Title I, Title II, and Title III funds to provide pre-kindergarten early learning programs, parent engagement activities, and transition programs to low-income children and English Learners.

- Middle school transition support will be expanded under ESSA with the design and implementation of guidance supporting summer school programs and community-based student mentoring.
- Student transitions from middle to high school are crucially important, and OSPI recognized that by including 9th Graders on-Track to Graduation as a SQSS indicator in our accountability index. If students fail just one ninth-grade class, their likelihood of dropping out of high school rises dramatically. This accountability measure comes alongside three continuing initiatives to help students stay in school: Student Learning Plans for at-risk students, High School and Beyond Plans for students to plan for their future, and the LAP Menus of Best Practices and Strategies, which offer research-based interventions for students who struggle with ELA, mathematics, or behavior.

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- Finally, OSPI works to facilitate transitions between high school and post-secondary aspirations by providing funding, resources, tools, data, and technical assistance to educators to ensure success, including Bridge to College transition courses, career and technical education and general education statewide equivalencies, career counseling, and more.

CONCLUSION

As OSPI moves closer to implementation of our ESSA plan,

work is moving forward to design guidance to help districts and schools make decisions on how to use state and federal funds to support their goals. By braiding state and federal funds, districts and schools are granted additional flexibility to focus their supports on students in need of individualized interventions. OSPI looks forward to working with districts, principals, and teachers during our implementation year, 2017-18, and into the future to provide unparalleled educational opportunities across Washington, helping every student become prepared for post-secondary aspirations, careers, and life. ■

LINKS:

OSPI's ESSA Consolidated Plan
<http://bit.ly/2igYOuT>

One-page flyers on the key changes to each program
<http://bit.ly/2hNtS1p>

USING DATA to Gauge Staff Readiness

Brett Willie

Principal, Hidden River Middle School

PRINCIPAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

Creating a Culture, Planning with Data, Improving Instruction

As a principal coming into a new building, there are a dozens of critical items to consider as we get the “lay of the land.” This onboarding process can be daunting when considering things like the formal and informal components of culture, the spoken and the unwritten norms that exist, the perceptions and expectations of all stakeholders, and the historical complexities around initiatives, instructional practice, and staff buy-in. Truly understanding

the current reality of a building is so important and can set us up for future success or, quite frankly, a crash and burn experience if we misjudge or misread any of these areas.

For most principals, somewhere buried deep within this process lies the yearning to determine next steps for school improvement, knowing where we are now, where we should head next and how ready the staff is to move forward. School improvement is an ongoing conversation and we all come with experiences and beliefs

about what works best and what the right answers are. This “where we need to head next” reality can be a delicate precipice for principals in an educational system that is littered with well-intended—yet ineffective—initiatives and unfruitful ideas. So how can we wade into this effectively?

WHERE TO START?

When I became principal at Hidden River Middle School in 2014, this was the exact ledge I walked. I was

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