



No Time for ESSA?

Here's a
10-minute read
on how to leverage
the Every Student
Succeeds Act to
benefit your school.

If there's one resource that principals across the nation agree is in high demand, regardless of the type of school they lead, it is time. Now that the Every Student Succeeds Act has passed and is at the implementation stage, principals must balance their everyday responsibilities to make sure that they invest in the future by helping to shape the new law's application at the state and local levels.

ESSA was designed to include principals and other stakeholders in the development of state plans. So, principals should be prepared to champion the policies that they know enable schools to deliver to students a well-rounded, complete education.

Whether it means an expanded curricular experience through arts integration or offering additional programs that address social-emotional learning, there is a real opportunity here to reimagine the opportunities that can be provided for all students.

Likewise, principals should work with colleagues and their district leaders to ensure that they recognize the law's potential to provide greater support for their own leadership.

Principals need strong training and support to be able to implement specific interventions and strategies, such as pre-K and afterschool programs, for example.

What Are the Issues?

Here's a cheat sheet on what you should know about the law and how to use it to advocate for your school. NAESP and the Center for Great Teachers & Leaders at the American Institutes for Research identified areas that should be of top concern for principals when discussing ESSA:

- **Standards and Assessments:** Principals should recommend assessment strategies that are best at helping schools provide the least punitive testing environment, such as eliminating duplicate or unnecessary assessments and including those that are the most informative for instructional purposes.
- **Accountability:** Principals should identify a variety of specific, quantifiable metrics and the criteria under which schools and students are to be held accountable. The new system must be based on growth rather than one snapshot in time that does not reflect the overall progress of students and schools.
- **School Improvement and Title I:** Principals should urge state and district leaders to embed solid education concepts in their school turnaround strategies, including how the state will use Title I funding. Title I plans should include goals and strategies to provide students with a well-rounded and complete education.
- **Professional Support:** Principals should urge state leaders to use, in its entirety, their new 3 percent Title II funding set aside to provide school leaders with focused support to improve their abilities.
- **Student Support and Academic Enrichment:** Plans should use flexible funding to help provide access to high-quality digital resources, activities, and programming designed to enhance education. Likewise, the program's conditions for learning investments could support health, wellness, and other initiatives that are part of a well-rounded and complete education.

- **High-Quality Early Learning:** Principals should encourage state leaders to make preschool a core part of the state ESSA plan by focusing on expanding access to high-quality early learning, encouraging alignment and collaboration from birth through the third grade, and providing training to better support teachers and leaders.

Hone Your Message

An important first step in effective communication is building a framework that can help you and your allies develop messaging that is clear, concise, and consistent. Without such a framework, the message can become fragmented, off-topic, and ineffective.

Here are three steps to build your message:

- 1** Start by developing a core statement about an area you want to see changed in policy and practice, such as boosting school climate or counting social-emotional learning as a measure of school success.
- 2** Next, state your talking points. The talking points (aim for three) should support your core message and include both objective and subjective information.
- 3** Finally, restate the core message. A conclusion must restate the desired change.

By breaking down the issue into a brief framework, you will ensure that the most succinct and compelling case can be made. You then will be able to skillfully speak about ESSA from a principal's perspective—regardless of the situation. **P**

This article stems from *Principals Action Plan for the Every Student Succeeds Act: Providing All Students With a Well-Rounded and Complete Education*. Access the full interactive toolkit at www.naesp.org/ESSA.