

Why educators support the Every Student Succeeds Act (S. 1177)



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For nearly 14 long years, students and educators have lived under the deeply flawed No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. The Every Student Succeeds Act returns decision making for our nation’s education back where it belongs - in the hands of local educators, parents and communities - while keeping the focus on students most in need.

The Every Student Succeeds Act

Provides more opportunity for all students, including for the first time, indicators of school success or student support to help identify and begin closing opportunity gaps

- Requires state-designed accountability systems to include at least one indicator of school success or student support—such as access to advanced coursework, school climate and safety free from bullying, fine arts, regular physical education, and counselors or nurses—to ensure that states report on opportunity gaps and take action to close them.
- Requires the use of multiple measures of student success in elementary, middle, and high school.

Includes less focus on, and a decoupling of, the high-stakes associated with standardized tests, so students have more time to learn and teachers have more time to teach

- While continuing to require annual tests in grades 3-8 and once in high school, the bill eliminates NCLB’s rigid system of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) aimed at 100 percent proficiency in deference to state defined goals. The bill also allows districts to apply to instead use another nationally recognized assessment in high school instead of the state standardized tests.
- Incorporates the SMART Act to provide funding for states to audit and streamline assessment systems, eliminate unnecessary and duplicative assessments, and improve the use of assessments.
- Creates a pilot program for state-designed assessment systems that allow for local district assessments driven by teaching and learning, not accountability alone, and allows all states that meet the criteria to participate.
- Maintains the right of parents and guardians to opt their children out of statewide academic assessments where state and local policies allow them to do so.
- Allows states to set a cap limiting the time students spend taking annual tests.

Empowering educators with a greater voice in educational and instructional decisions

- Moves decision-making to the people who know the names of the students they educate while maintaining supports that ensure zip codes do not determine the quality of education.
- Incentivizes supports and interventions that are tailored to local needs while preserving the historic federal role in protecting the most vulnerable: children of poverty, students with disabilities, and English-language learners.
- Recognizes that the one-size-fits-all approach does not work, and calls for committees of practitioners that include educators, parents and community constituents to work together to improve their local schools.
- Maintains paraeducator qualification requirements and requires paraeducator voice in multiple relevant sections of the bill, including as it relates to professional development.
- Prohibits the federal government from mandating teacher evaluations or defining teacher effectiveness.
- Protects state and local collective bargaining agreements and allows those to cover educator provisions in Title II, including all of professional development provisions and the Teacher Incentive Fund. Ensures that educators and their local unions have a say in their professional development continuum.

Includes prohibitions on the Secretary of Education's authority

- Restrictions on secretarial authority are present throughout the bill and are focused on prohibiting the U.S. Secretary of Education from dictating specific mandates. These include mandates on: standards and assessments, how much elements of the accountability plans should count for or even the criteria themselves, parameters of the accountability system, additional data collection, exit requirements, teacher evaluation, and the definition of teacher effectiveness.

Additional notable aspects of the bill

- Provides greater access to early childhood education by authorizing alignment and improvement grants to improve coordination of current funding.
- Establishes full service community schools program to promote additional ways to serve the needs of the whole child, including wraparound services and supports for children in high-need communities.
- **Does not** include Title I portability. This exclusion is vital because Title I portability dilutes the impact of Title I, is harmful to students attending Title I schools, and portability does nothing to address the failure to fund Title I adequately.

Simply stated, the Every Student Succeeds Act will help ensure that all students, regardless of their zip code, will have the support, tools, and time to learn that they need to succeed and that educators' voices are part of the decision making process at all levels. Students who are high school seniors this year have spent their *entire* K-12 experience under NCLB. It is long past time to fix this broken law and give the next generation of students the resources and support they need.