

ESSA Implementation: What Can I Expect for 2016-17?

The Department of Education recently published updated guidance on transitioning to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and what that means for the 2016-17 school year. Here are some Frequently Asked Questions:

1. **Will my school or district's Title I or Title II funding levels change for the 2016-17 school year?**

Title I and II dollars, also known as formula grants, will be allocated using the same formulas as used in the 2015-16 school year. States and districts should receive roughly the same amount next year and should continue to use these dollars to carry out their formula grant plans in the 2016-17 school year, with a few exceptions listed below.

2. **My school failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress under NCLB. Will our school be required to send home school "failure" letters to families?**

No, notice to parents will not be required in the 2016-17 school year. ESSA does not mandate a statewide accountability system with federally defined annual measurable objectives and defined adequate yearly progress.

3. **My school failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress under NCLB. Will our school be required to provide eligible students public school choice transportation services?**

No, districts will no longer be required to provide public school choice and transportation services for 2016-17. Districts may choose to use their Title I dollars to continue to offer this to eligible students, but it is not mandatory. However, the district must allow a student who previously transferred to a school under public school choice to stay in that school through the highest grade offered.

4. **My school failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress under NCLB. Will our school be required to provide eligible students supplemental educational services (tutoring)?**

No, schools will not be required to provide supplemental educational services for the 2016-17 school year but may choose to set aside Title I funds for this purpose.

5. **Will I continue to have to meet highly qualified requirements as a teacher?**

No, highly qualified teacher requirements will not be required starting in the 2016-17 school year, or for any teacher hired or assigned after Dec. 10, 2015. Additionally, this ends the practice of notifying families when a student has been assigned to, or has been taught for four or more weeks by a teacher who is not highly qualified. *Teachers will need to continue to meet state certification and endorsement requirements for their teaching assignment.*

6. **What is our current state policy regarding endorsements and teaching assignments?**

Individuals may teach outside of their endorsement area if certain conditions are met. The [Professional Educator Standards Board](#) summarizes the policy as follows, "Local school boards must approve non-matching teacher assignments, and provide for support of the teacher being assigned out-of-endorsement."

If teachers are assigned outside of their endorsement area, the following needs to happen:

- The district and the teacher "mutually develop a written plan" for assistance to the teacher. The plan needs to provide "a reasonable amount of planning and study time associated specifically with the out-of-endorsement assignment." Plans might include mentoring, PLC time with teachers in the content area, taking a course, independent study, and so on. The plan does **not** have to include acquiring the endorsement, although it may.

- The out-of-endorsement assignment needs to be approved by the local school board.
- Please note, per [WAC](#), “**Teachers shall not be subject to nonrenewal or probation** based on evaluations of their teaching effectiveness in the out-of-endorsement assignments.”
- A teacher who has completed 24 quarter credit hours of course work applicable to a special education endorsement is eligible for a pre-endorsement waiver which will allow that person to be employed as a special education teacher. All remaining requirements for special education endorsement must be completed within five years.

7. Will I continue to have to meet highly qualified requirements as a paraprofessional?

While ESSA no longer uses the term “highly qualified,” paraprofessionals working in Title I Part A programs must continue to meet the current standards required under NCLB. For more information on current paraprofessional requirements, click [HERE](#). The state is currently reviewing paraprofessional standards and could adopt new standards for those working in Title I, Part A programs in time for the 2017-18 school year.

8. I work in a school that was identified as a Priority or Focus School, received a School Improvement Grant, or was identified as a Required Action District. Are we still required to implement our school improvement plan?

Yes – student supports and other interventions that were a part of your 2015-16 school improvement plan must continue during the 2016-17 school year. OSPI will release Priority and Focus grants for 2016-17 in early May. School failure letters, school choice, and supplemental education services are no longer required.

Additionally, OSPI was required to establish an AYP transition plan for the 2016-17 school year that will focus on “schools with the greatest need.” OSPI has designated [Priority](#) and [Focus](#) schools identified in the spring of 2015 as schools with the greatest need. Priority and Focus schools will be expected to set aside up to 20 percent of their Title I, Part A funds to implement strategies that improve student outcomes **OR** describe in their 2016-17 Title I, Part A grant application the actions they are taking to improve student outcomes at their Priority or Focus schools. The optional set aside does not include OSPI’s grants for Priority and Focus schools in 2016-17. The optional set aside may be used for public school choice transportation or supplemental education services, but is not mandatory.

The full Department of Education’s Transitioning to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) guidance is available [HERE](#).

Prepared by Sally McNair, smcnair@washingtona.org, National and State Education Policy Implementation Coordinator, and Maren Johnson, maren.johnson@washingtona.org, Certification Specialist, WEA’s Center for Education Quality