



# THE WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

*"Every student receives a quality education that prepares for career, college, and life."*

## Questions for Panel Every Student Succeeds Act January 14, 2014

1. What do you see as the most beneficial changes made by the Every Student Succeeds Act from the prior reauthorization of the ESEA, known as the No Child Left Behind Act, and why? What are your greatest concerns for implementation of the new law moving forward?
2. The Every Student Succeeds Act shifts most responsibility for academic standards and school accountability from the federal education department to state education agencies and school districts. This change has elicited both praise and criticism from commentators. Washington Post columnist Michael Gerson has [written](#):

"The problem? We actually have some experience in how education systems operate in the absence of accountability enforced from above. Before No Child Left Behind, only 29 states had real accountability systems; 11 states did not disaggregate by race at all; only 22 states reported graduation rates by high school. What will happen with the end of federal nagging? 'We'll continue to see some high-flying states doing really creative, good things for students,' [concludes](#) education researcher Chad Aldeman. "But we'll see a lot more just kind of getting by and doing the bare minimum, particularly when local politics and inertia prevent state leaders from pursuing bold changes on behalf of disadvantaged students."

Do you agree? Why or why not? Are the provisions in the Every Student Succeeds Act sufficient to prevent the retreat predicted by some from the accountability for outcomes for poor, disadvantaged and minority students that was a motivating force behind NCLB?

3. The Every Student Succeeds Act leaves open for state interpretation (by design) some key elements of the act. For instance, states must establish "challenging academic content standards." States must establish "ambitious long-term goals" for all students and subgroups of students. The state-defined index used to measure progress toward goals must assign "substantial weight" to each of four specified academic indicators, which in the aggregate must be given "much greater weight" than an additional, state-selected indicator of school quality and student success. State education agencies must notify each school district of any school served by it that is "consistently underperforming." What concerns, if any, do you have about resolving questions like these as the state, with stakeholders, develops the state plan?
  4. Unlike under NCLB and the waivers from provisions of that law, the ESSA prescribes no specific school improvement strategies, leaving determination of those strategies most likely to be effective to the individual states and districts. Do you see the state as most likely, and best advised, to continue school improvement strategies implemented under previous law, or to explore new strategies as well?
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