

# Preparing for the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA): Early Learning



## Developing a Comprehensive State Plan Pursuant to the Every Student Succeeds Act A Supplemental Tool for Structuring Your Plan for Preschool to Third Grade

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November 2016

In November 2016, CCSSO published [a tool for SEAs to develop a comprehensive state ESSA plan](#). The purpose of the resource is to provide a tool to support chiefs in their states as they consider how to approach writing a comprehensive state plan to articulate a coherent system while ensuring that the statutory requirements set forth in the reauthorized ESEA are met. This guide is intended to encourage states in moving beyond the traditional compliance-oriented approaches for responding to federal requirements. Rather, developing ESSA state plans can serve as an opportunity for chiefs to frame their work within an overall vision for education and demonstrate how different components in that system are part of a coherent approach toward achieving the overall goals of success in college, career, and life.

Since the early years prior to school and in the lower grades set the stage for learning and school success, this [supplemental tool](#) below is intended to engage more deliberately in integrating early learning into the ESSA plan. It also reflects the intent of ESSA to recognize early childhood education as part of the states' education reform agenda. This tool compliments other CCSSO resources, such as [ESSA and Early Childhood Education – Opportunities for State Leaders](#) and [Equity Starts Early – How Chiefs Will Build High-Quality Early Education](#) as well as the U.S. Department of Education's [Non-Regulatory Guidance for Early Learning in the Every Student Succeeds Act](#).

This tool has been produced by CCSSO in collaboration with the Center for Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO). It is a draft document that will be updated based on feedback from stakeholders. For more information on ESSA and Early Learning Resources, see CEELO's ESSA page [here](#).

## How to apply the questions from the Developing a Comprehensive State Plan pursuant to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to Early Childhood Education, Birth to third Grade?

CCSSO Tool <sup>1</sup> - Questions to Consider	As applied to early childhood education, birth to third grade
<b>Overview of vision and goals<sup>2</sup></b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>What is your vision with regard to your education system?</b></li><li>• <b>What are the goals of your system? How does this plan help drive toward achieving those goals?</b></li><li>• <b>How will you evaluate your effectiveness on an ongoing basis?</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Does your vision include early childhood education, particularly PreK<sup>3</sup> to third grade?</li><li>• How does high quality early learning support the goals of your system?</li><li>• How will the state evaluate the effectiveness of high quality early learning in PreK to third grade?</li></ul>
<b>Stakeholder Engagement<sup>4</sup></b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>How have stakeholders been engaged throughout the development of your plan?</b></li><li>• <b>How have you incorporated stakeholder feedback into your plan? How is that reflected?</b></li><li>• <b>How do you plan to continue to engage with stakeholders as you move to implementation?</b></li><li>• <b>How do you plan to continue to engage with stakeholders as you reflect and refine your plan in the future?</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Have stakeholders representing early learning been engaged throughout the development of your plan (e.g., your state’s Early Childhood Advisory Council)</li><li>• How have you incorporated stakeholder feedback from stakeholders representing early learning into your plan? How is that reflected?</li><li>• How do you plan to continue to engage with stakeholders as you move to implementation?</li></ul>

<sup>1</sup> Not all the questions and information from this tool is incorporated in this supplemental tool. We advise the user of this supplemental tool to review the original document, [Developing a Comprehensive State Plan Pursuant to the Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> CCSSO’s [State Strategic Vision Guide](#) is a resource for Chiefs as they solidify, reform, and enact their vision for their state in the context of increased flexibility now provided in the federal law.

<sup>3</sup> PreK refers to publicly funded prekindergarten for four-year olds.

<sup>4</sup> CCSSO’s [Meeting in a Box](#) is a resource for engaging stakeholders – from planning to executing meetings and communication.

CCSSO Tool<sup>1</sup> - Questions to Consider

As applied to early childhood education, birth to third grade

Academic Standards

- **Is there any information about your standards you want to include as part of your comprehensive narrative about your education system? This could include:**
  - **Academic achievement standards aligned to college and career-ready expectations**
  - **Alternate academic achievement standards**
  - **English language proficiency standards<sup>5</sup>**
- **How does this work intersect with the rest of your comprehensive system (e.g. supporting excellent educators, supporting struggling schools, etc.)?**
- Is there any information about your state's early learning standards (Birth to K) that you want to include as part of your comprehensive narrative about your education system?
- How are the early learning standards aligned with the academic standards of your state and how does its implementation intersect with the rest of your comprehensive system (e.g., professional development, supporting early learning programs, instruction and assessment)?

Academic Assessments

- **What is your overall approach to implement a comprehensive system of high-quality assessments in your state?<sup>6</sup>**
- **What summative assessments are you administering?**
- **Do your English language proficiency (ELP) assessments align with your ELP standards? If not, what is your strategy for moving to an aligned system?**
- What is your overall approach to implement appropriate assessment systems to monitor student progress in PreK to third grade?
- Does your state administer a summative assessment in Kindergarten?
- Do you have a statewide uniform assessment of ELP in PreK? If not, what is your strategy for moving to such an assessment to identify language needs for entering kindergarteners?

<sup>5</sup> CCSSO's English Language Standards Resources: 1. [English Language Proficiency Development \(ELPD\) Framework](#) assists with communication to ELL stakeholders in states-from chief state school officers and district chief academic officers to state/district ELL and content area specialists to curriculum developers and teacher leaders-the language practices that all ELLs must acquire in order to successfully master the CCSS and Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). It is intended to be used in ensuring that ELP standards correspond to the CCSS and NGSS. 2. [English Language Proficiency \(ELP\) Standards](#) correspond to the CCSS and the Next Generation Science Standards, highlighting and amplifying the *critical language, knowledge about language, and skills using language* in the CCSS necessary for ELLs to become successful in schools.

<sup>6</sup> CCSSO's High-Quality Assessment Resources: 1. [High-Quality Assessment Principles](#) set forth a set of principles to ensure the assessments states select are meeting the high-bar they expect. The principles are a tool for states to hold themselves and their assessments accountable for high quality. 2. [Criteria for Procuring and Evaluation High-Quality Assessments](#) focuses on the critical characteristics that should be met by high-quality assessments aligned to college- and career-readiness standards.

**CCSSO Tool<sup>1</sup> - Questions to Consider**

**As applied to early childhood education, birth to third grade**

- **Do you have a statewide uniform assessment of ELP? If not, what is your strategy for moving to such an assessment?**
  - **What is your approach for providing appropriate accommodations?**
  - **What is your approach to providing native-language assessments in the non-English languages present to a significant extent in your State's student population?**
- What is your approach to providing native-language assessments in PreK to third grade in the non-English languages present to a significant extent in your State's student population?
  - How is the assessment information, PreK to third grade, used to inform instructional practices?

**School Improvement**

- **What's your theory of action for how your SEA's actions will lead to improvement in comprehensive support and improvement schools?**
    - **What is your process for approving district plans for school improvement?**
    - **What is your process for monitoring and reviewing the plans on an ongoing basis?**
  - **How will the SEA partner with districts to help them improve low-performing schools, and how will SEA support to LEAs be differentiated or prioritized (such as by the LEA's capacity, commitment to change, and whether they have a clear and compelling strategy)?**
  - **Will the SEA distribute Title I school improvement funds to LEAs as a formula grant, competitive grant, or a hybrid of the two (ex., formula grant where every district with CSI schools receives a small floor of funding, and other funding is contingent on quality of**
- How will accelerated improvement and innovation in PreK to third grade support your theory of action of improvement in comprehensive support and improvement schools?
  - Does your process for approving district plans for school improvement include strategies for PreK to third grade or Birth to third grade?
  - Will SEA specialist representing early learning/early literacy be included in the process for monitoring and reviewing of plans?
  - How will the SEA partner support local districts improve low-performing schools beyond continuous improvement strategies within the school and district administration (e.g., improving school readiness for entering kindergarteners, family and community engagement such as early literacy initiatives)?
  - How will the SEA support schools and districts in selecting evidence-based interventions for PreK to third grade that target root causes (e.g., results-based accountability or similar continuous improvement models)?

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the plan, level of need, and commitment to change from the school and LEA)?<sup>7</sup>

- How will the SEA support schools and districts in selecting evidence-based interventions that target root causes identified in the school-level needs assessment?
- Have you considered how [U.S. ED's Sept. 2016 Non-Regulatory Guidance: Using Evidence to Strengthen Education Investments](#) informs your approach?

Workforce

Overview

- What are you trying to achieve with your education workforce initiatives?
- How does this work intersect with the rest of your comprehensive system (e.g. standards implementation, supporting struggling schools, improving instruction and outcomes for ELL, SWD, low-income, minority and other students for whom ESSA is intended to serve, etc.)?

Educator Development, Retention, and Advancement Systems

- How are you considering using federal funds to attract, prepare, develop and retain effective teachers and leaders?<sup>8</sup>

- How is your workforce initiative including an effective educator workforce for PreK to third grade?
- How can an effective educator workforce in PreK to third grade improve third grade outcomes and continued school success?
- How do the proposed activities contribute to the development of an education workforce better at identifying students in PreK to third grade, with learning needs, including, among others, low-literacy, and increase effectiveness at serving high-poverty and minority students?
- Do your proposed professional learning investments for PreK to third grade, meet the definition of “high quality professional learning” that can advance student achievement and success in school?”

<sup>7</sup> Please note that the NPRM would require that the SEA, in allocating funds, provide at least \$50,000 for each TSI school and at least \$500,000 for each CSI school, unless the SEA can conclude (based on a demonstration by the LEA in its application) that a smaller amount would suffice.

<sup>8</sup> In December, CCSSO will release a Title IIA Toolkit that introduces the new Title IIA framework as well as new requirements and changes to the Title II funding structure, including set-asides. The Toolkit will also guide State’s in how to implement their Title II vision, from designing or improving the equity plan through communicating with key stakeholders. This resource will be posted to [www.ccsso.org/ESSA](http://www.ccsso.org/ESSA).

**CCSSO Tool<sup>1</sup> - Questions to Consider**

**As applied to early childhood education, birth to third grade**

- **How will your agency focus on your highest education workforce priorities with the additional funding flexibility throughout ESSA, including Title II and the new 3% optional set aside for activities to strengthen school leadership?**
- **How do the proposed activities contribute to the development of an education workforce better at identifying students with learning needs, including, among others, low-literacy, and increase effectiveness at serving high-poverty and minority students?**
- **If you will use Title II dollars to refine or revise your teacher or leader evaluation system, how will you do so?**
- **Do your proposed professional learning investments meet the definition of “high quality professional learning” that can advance student achievement and success in school?”**
- **Will your state use federal funds to support teacher preparation, including PreK to third grade teacher and elementary school leader preparation academies?**
- **How might your state draw on opportunities to use Title II, Part A funds to facilitate the development of practice-rich teacher preparation, PreK to third grade, and promote the incorporation of pre-service residencies across LEAs?**
- **How will you work to ensure that low-income and minority children, PreK to third grade, enrolled in Title I schools are not served at disproportionate rates by ineffective, out-of-field and inexperienced teachers, principals or other school leaders?**

**Teacher Preparation**

- **Will your state use federal funds to support teacher preparation, including teacher and leader preparation academies?**
- **How might your state draw on opportunities to use Title II, Part A funds to facilitate the development of practice-rich teacher preparation and promote the incorporation of pre-service residencies across LEAs?**
- **Are you considering using funds to reform your states teacher and school leader certification and licensing system to strengthen entry into the profession and**

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**As applied to early childhood education, birth to third grade**

**ensure all teachers are learner-ready and leaders are school-ready on day one?**

**Teacher Equity**

- **How will you work to ensure that low-income and minority children enrolled in Title I schools are not served at disproportionate rates by ineffective, out-of-field and inexperienced teachers, principals or other school leaders?**
  - **How are you thinking about the transition from using school-level data to student level data for this requirement?**
  - **How does your consolidated plan incorporate your State Educator Equity Plan with timeline, strategies and funding?**
  - **How have you defined key terms (“in-field”, experienced, effective, low-income student and minority student) and how are you thinking about reporting on those who don’t meet these definitions?**



**Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grant (SSAE)**

- **How are you considering providing support to LEAs in developing their needs assessments as part of the state’s application and approval process?**
- **How are you thinking about coordinating and integrating the SSAE programs with activities authorized under other sections of the law, as well as**
- **How are you considering providing support to LEAs in developing their needs assessments as part of the state’s application and approval process (i.e., coordinating with early childhood education providers such as Head Start)?**
- **How are you defining “well-rounded education”<sup>10</sup> for PreK to third grade?**

<sup>10</sup> “Well-rounded education” is defined in ESEA section 8101(52)

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**other federal programs to improve outcomes for students?**

- **How are you working with LEAs to support them in prioritizing the distribution of funds to schools based on one or more of several factors, including schools that are (i) are among those with the greatest needs, as determined by the LEA, (ii) have the highest numbers of students from low-income families, (iii) are identified for comprehensive support and improvement under *Title I, Part A* of the *ESEA*; (iv) are implementing targeted support and improvement plans under *Title I, Part A* of the *ESEA*; or (v) are identified as a persistently dangerous public school under section 8532 of the *ESEA*?<sup>9</sup> (*ESEA* section 4106(e)(2))**

- How will your SEA support local districts in coordinating the improvement of conditions of learning that are best suited to the learning styles and learning needs of students, PreK to third grade (e.g., personalized learning, inclusion, multi-age grouping, looping)?
- How will your SEA support local districts to improve the use of technology to enhance academic achievement and digital literacy among PreK to third grade students?

**Reflection and Refinement**

- How can your state establish systems of periodic review and continuous improvement, including PreK to third grade, that can help shift culture toward learning systems that can best advance college- and career-ready outcomes over time?
- What forms of evidence should those systems consider and on what cycles?
- How can your state establish structures for productive, ongoing stakeholder engagement?
- What are the core strategies and models?

This tool is adapted from CCSSO's [Developing a Comprehensive State Plan pursuant to the Every Student Succeeds Act: A Tool for Structuring Your Plan](#) (November 2016)

<sup>9</sup> Please see USED's *Non-Regulatory Guidance - Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants* for more information.