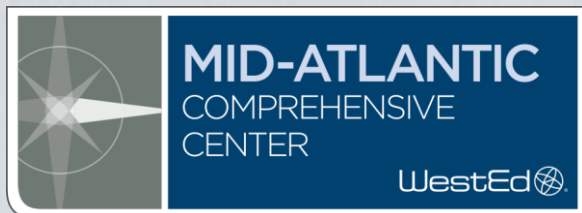


Leveraging Needs Assessments to Support School Improvement through Early Learning in ESSA

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Objectives

1. **Outline opportunities in ESSA needs assessment requirements**
2. **Consider SEA roles in needs assessments**
3. **Share intentions and plans**
4. **Explore guiding questions and data elements**

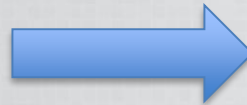


Starting Assumption

Developmentally appropriate practice (DAP)...

- involves teachers meeting young children ***where they are***, both as individuals and as part of a group; and ***helping each child meet challenging and achievable learning goals.***

(<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/topics/dap>)



ESSA Requirements for school improvement

- Needs assessment
- Applying evidence-based instruction and supports
- Improve student learning

Early Learning contributions to....

ESSA Implementation 101:

SEA Consolidated Plans LEA Planning



Every Student Succeeds Act: Guiding LEA Needs Assessments and Plan Development to Consider Early Learning

Early learning proponents have been actively seeking opportunities in Consolidated State plans for explicit recognition of the critical foundational role of the pre-K to grade 3 years. Advocates acknowledge a limited number of explicit references to early learning in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), but have discovered many openings in the law where resources could be used for early learning at the state educational agency level (SEAs) and by local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools.

Once Consolidated State plans have been approved at the federal level, everyone's attention will turn to the development of LEA plans to be approved by SEAs. Local early learning supporters will need persistence to highlight and then advocate for opportunities to increase access and quality within LEA and school plans. Important vehicles for advocacy are the needs assessments that LEAs undertake as part of local plan development. Local needs assessments, if structured appropriately, can play a major role in raising the profile of early learning needs and options during the development of LEA and school plans. Without special attention to early learning during the needs assessment process, LEAs may simply not think about the possibilities and continue with past patterns of expenditures.

This brief is intended to help SEAs consider options for framing LEA needs assessments and plan development activities from an early learning perspective, and then communicating possibilities to local districts. The brief includes:

- **Options for the SEA Role**—a list of actions that the state agency can take proactively to support LEA needs assessments;

- **LEA Needs Assessments in ESSA**—the law's expectations for LEA needs assessments and plan development within the Titles along with challenges that SEAs can help address;
- **Shaping Local Needs Assessments through Guiding Questions**—examples of question sequences that can guide LEA and school discussions; and
- **Shaping Local Needs Assessments through Data Elements**—examples of data elements and simple analyses that could inform a profile of local early learning needs.

Options for the SEA Role

The state educational agency can take a leadership role in guiding LEA needs assessments and plan development by taking one or more of the following actions:

- Provide a **template** for LEA needs assessments and plans that includes early learning requirements and/or options—ideally this would be a template for a consolidated LEA needs assessment and plan;
- **Require** consideration of and reporting on results from analysis of data elements that are relevant to early learning access and quality (e.g., percent of entering kindergartners with pre-K experience);
- Provide **summary data** from state-level databases (which may be found in different agencies' data systems) to provide **comparative information** for LEAs (e.g., the percent of children with risk factors);
- Provide **training and guidance** to LEAs about the conduct of needs assessments and plan development, including information about the types of data that would facilitate determination of early learning needs;
- **Review LEA plans** and plan justifications from the perspective of early learning access and quality, including the addition of an early learning specialist to the SEA review teams; and
- Provide **comments on LEA plans** to incorporate early learning opportunities.

LEA Needs Assessment and Plan Development Under ESSA

In many ways, the contribution of ESSA to improving outcomes for students rests on the

ESSA Terminology Varies



- **Comprehensive needs assessments**
- Identification of students who may be at risk
- **Meaningful consultations about improvements with teachers, parents, etc.**
- Assessment of students' unique needs
- **Plans based on analysis of needs**

Provisions in ESSA for Needs Assessment

Title I Part A Improving Basic Programs, LEA Plans, Schoolwide Programs , School Improvement (needs assessments)

- **Title II Part A High Quality Teachers and Principals (advice and meaningful consultation)**

Title III English Learners and Immigrant Students (based on student unique needs)

- **Title IV, Part A Student Support and Academic Enrichment (needs assessments)**

ESSA Requirements

Example: Comprehensive support and school improvement

+

SEA Requirements

Example: Targeted support and improvement for schools

+

SEA Recommendations

Example: Expand pre-K



LEA Plans

Define need, solution, evidence for use

Getting Perspective

- *What are your SEA's roles related to needs assessment?*
- *What is the potential role for early education related to needs assessment?*

What's your SEA's Perspective?

Directive

Encouraging

Neutral

**Design tools
Supply data
Facilitate reviews**

**Offer training
Suggest data elements**

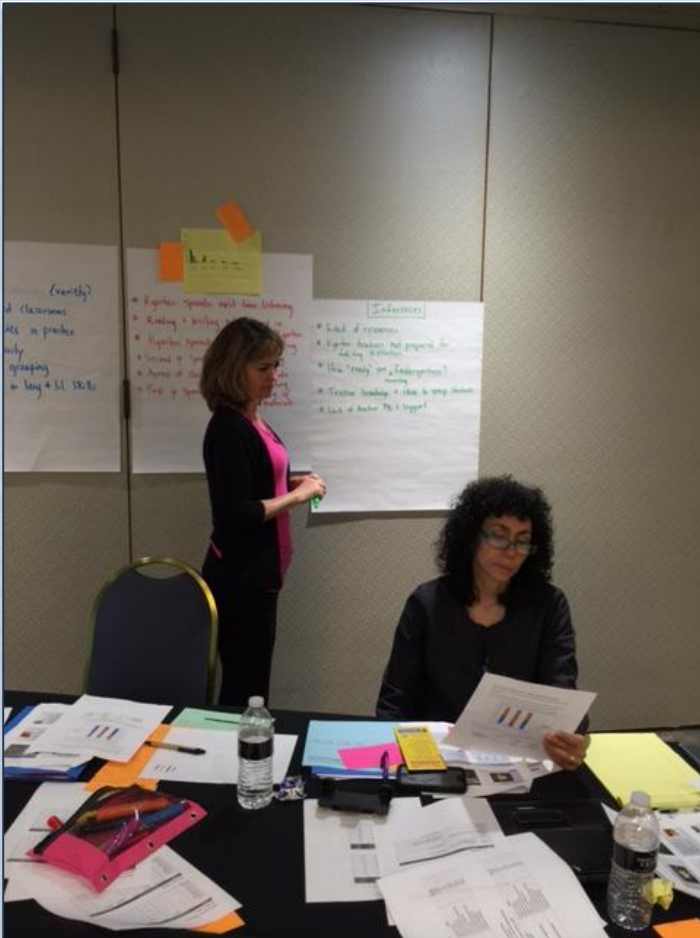
**State minimum
requirements**

SEA Roles in Needs Assessment



- Design tools/templates
- Supply summary data
- Provide training and assistance
- Model guiding questions
- Suggest uses of available data
- Facilitate data sharing across agencies
- Review plans from needs lens

What position are you in to support LEA consideration of early learning needs?



- **Basic information about opportunities in ESSA planning?**
- **Support/authority to “enter” local planning processes?**
- **Templates/survey items/ data examples?**
- **Access to data from other systems?**

Helping LEAs Approach Needs Assessments

- **Connect** needs data to program possibilities that exist in the Titles
 - Use both quantitative and **qualitative** data
 - Consider data about both children and adults
 - Use data about needs and opportunities
- Show how to combine data about **state patterns** with local information
 - Emphasize **comparisons** among population subgroups

Spark Thinking with Guiding Questions



**Title II for training
K-1 teachers in
literacy?**

**Use Title I to
extend Pre-K?**

To what extent have students entering kindergarten had experiences that prepare them to succeed?

Examples of Guiding Questions

- What proportion of incoming kindergartners have participated in preschool?
- What is the breakdown of preschool settings and what is known about the quality of those settings (e.g., QRIS ratings)?
- What are the characteristics of children who don't receive preschool services?
- What are the experiences of low-income children?
...of dual language learners?

Spark Thinking with Relevant Early Childhood Data

**Parent perceptions
of K experiences**

**Struggling 3rd grade
readers**

**Training and credentials of
Pre-K-3 teachers**

**Percent
without Pre-K
experiences**



**Draw
Implications
from Data
Analysis for Title
Funding**

Examine early histories of students who are struggling in 3rd grade reading

- gaps in preparation
- screening not accurate
- interventions not adequate
- dual language learner challenges

Summary

- ESSA needs assessment and evidence requirements set the stage for early learning
- Needs assessments allow us to create a narrative through guiding questions and data elements that
- This narrative can speak to improving student learning drawn across ESSA Titles