

School Accountability and New York's Economy

What is the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)?

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is bipartisan federal legislation that replaces No Child Left Behind (NCLB) as our nation's most important K-12 education law. Unlike NCLB, which imposed strict mandates, ESSA gives states flexibility to craft their own systems to hold schools accountable for student outcomes. In the next few months, state leaders are making big decisions about what it means to be a successful school, what rate of academic progress is acceptable, and what to do when schools are not meeting our expectations.

Will New York seize this opportunity to shine a light on the students and schools that need help in order to succeed? Or will policymakers take advantage of the flexibility granted under the new federal law to sweep failing schools under the rug?

Why is it important to hold schools accountable for the college- and career-readiness of their graduates?

To a troubling degree, New York employers report difficulty finding workers with skills in data analysis, critical thinking, problem-solving, communications, research, and applied mathematics. The origins of this skills gap lie in New York's education pipeline: Fewer than 40% of New York's high school students graduate with the literacy and math skills they need for college and careers.

By itself, a well-designed school accountability system cannot solve New York's skills gap, but it is an important piece of the puzzle. That is why an unprecedented coalition of major organizations representing business and employers, the civil rights community, educators, and parents from across New York State has come together to call for state policymakers to incorporate certain principles and provisions into the new accountability system under ESSA.

To ensure that academic achievement is the main driver of school performance ratings and improvement strategies, New York State's accountability system must:

- Maintain high academic standards;
- Ensure that academic measures represent more than 75% of a school's rating; and
- Include measures of college and career readiness, designed with input from the business community.

How can employers and the business community make their voices heard?

Chambers of Commerce and business leaders across the state are stepping up to host and participate in a series of regional meetings to discuss how we can use ESSA to support our economy and advance student success.



Contact irosenblum@edtrustny.org or log onto www.EquityInEdNY.org to find out how to host or participate in a regional meeting and make your voice heard.