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## No Child Left Behind Is Out; Every Student Succeeds Is In

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### How It All Began

President Lyndon Baines Johnson believed “full educational opportunity” should be “our first national goal.” In 1965, he signed the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) into law. From its inception, ESEA was a civil rights law. This law provided state educational agencies with new federal grants to improve the quality of elementary and secondary education in districts needing textbooks, library books, funding for special education, and scholarships for low income college students.

### No Child Left Behind and Accountability

Fast forward to 2001 and the creation of *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB). President George W. Bush’s appointed team of education leaders exposed achievement gaps among traditionally under-served students and their peers, therefore spurring an important national dialogue on education improvement. A focus on accountability was critical in ensuring a quality education for all children; however, this focus on accountability also revealed many challenges in the effective implementation of this goal.



*No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) Act, enacted in 2002, represented a significant step forward for our nation’s children in many respects. It shed light on where students were making progress and where they needed additional support regardless of race, income, zip code, disability, home language, or background. NCLB was up for revision in 2007. Over time, its prescriptive requirements became increasingly unworkable for schools and



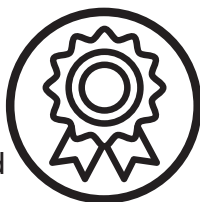
educators. Many states found NCLB goals to be unrealistic and got around them by either creating “super subgroups” that lumped all disadvantaged students together, or changing to more subjective measures like parent/teacher involvement. Recognizing this fact, in 2010, President Barack Obama’s administration joined a call from educators and families to create a better law focusing on the goal of fully preparing all students for success in college and careers.

In 2012, the Obama administration began granting flexibility to states regarding specific requirements of NCLB in exchange for more rigorous and comprehensive state-developed plans designed to close achievement gaps, increase equity, improve the quality of instruction, and increase outcomes for all students. On December 10, 2015, President Obama signed the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA). Lawmakers tout the new law as a more

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flexible approach to student testing and school accountability, once again making states responsible for fixing under-performing schools. This bipartisan measure reauthorized Johnson's 50-year-old *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*, the nation's national education law and longstanding commitment to equal opportunity for all students. ESSA builds upon key areas of progress made in recent years by the efforts of educators, communities, parents, and students across the country. The new law leaves accountability goals almost entirely up to the states. States must submit their accountability plans to the Department of Education, which still has a limited oversight role. Today, high school graduation rates are at all-time highs. Dropout rates are at historic lows, and more students are going to college than ever before. These achievements provide a firm foundation for expanding educational opportunities and



improving student outcomes under ESSA, including provisions to help ensure success for students and schools. The new law is much more specific about which schools need intervention but much less specific on what those interventions should be. Schools at the bottom 5% of assessment scores (as defined by the state), high schools that graduate less than 67% of students, or schools where subgroups are consistently under-performing would be considered failing and could be subject to state takeover — although the law doesn't say what the state needs to do.

Below are just a few of the changes included in ESSA:

### Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) – 2015:

- Advances equity for America's disadvantaged and high-need students.
- Requires—for the first time—that all students in America be taught to high academic standards that will prepare them to succeed in college and careers.
- Ensures that vital information is provided to educators, families, students, and communities through annual statewide assessments that will measure students' progress toward those high standards.
- Helps support and grow local innovations—including evidence-based and place-based interventions developed by local leaders and educators.
- Sustains and expands increasing access to high-quality preschool.
- Maintains the expectation of accountability and action to affect positive change in our lowest-performing schools, where groups of students are not making progress, and where graduation rates are low over extended periods of time.

#### Resources:

Korte, Gregory. December 11, 2015. Retrieved February 2016 from <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2015/12/10/every-student-succeeds-act-vs-no-child-left-behind-whatschanged/77088780/>

Martin, Carmel and Sargrad, Scott. December 3, 2015. Leaving behind no child left behind. Retrieved February 20, 2016 from <http://www.usnews.com/opinion/knowledge-bank/2015/12/03/every-student-succeeds-act-is-better-than-no-child-left-behind>

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