

# The Every Child Achieves Act of 2015

## TITLE I –

**Lets states develop accountability systems** – The bill ends the federal test-based accountability system of No Child Left Behind, restoring to states the responsibility for determining how to use federally required tests for accountability purposes. States must include these tests in their accountability systems, but will be able to determine the weight of those tests in their systems. States will also be required to include graduation rates, one measure of postsecondary education or workforce readiness, and English proficiency for English learners. States will also be permitted to include other measures of student and school performance in their accountability systems in order to provide teachers, parents, and other stakeholders with a more accurate determination of school performance.

**Maintains important information for parents, teachers, and communities** – The bill maintains the federally required two tests in reading and math per child per year in grades 3 through 8 and once in high school, as well as science tests given three times between grades 3 and 12. These important measures of student achievement ensure that parents know how their children are performing and help teachers support students who are struggling to meet standards. States will be given additional flexibility to pilot innovative assessment systems in school districts across the state.

**Helps states improve low-performing schools** - The bill includes federal grants to states and school districts to help improve low performing schools that are identified by the state accountability systems. School districts will be responsible for designing evidence-based interventions for low performing schools, with technical assistance from the states, and the federal government is prohibited from mandating, prescribing, or defining the specific steps school districts and states must take to improve those schools. The bill does require that states monitor interventions implemented by school districts and take steps to further assist school districts if interventions are not effective.

**Strengthens state and local control** – The bill recognizes that states, working with school districts, teachers, and others, have the responsibility for creating accountability systems to ensure all students are learning and prepared for success. These accountability systems will be entirely state-designed but must meet federal parameters, including ensuring all students and subgroups of students are included in the accountability system, disaggregating student achievement data, and establishing challenging academic standards for all students. The federal government is prohibited from determining or approving state standards.

**Supports One-Percent Assessment for Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities**

– The bill supports a state-level cap of one-percent on students with the most significant cognitive disabilities tested on the alternate academic achievement standards. This provides school districts with flexibility, as long as the number of those proficient scores does not exceed one percent of all students in the state.

**Improves peer review process** – The bill requires the Secretary to approve a State plan within 90 days of its submission unless the U.S. Department of Education can present substantial evidence that clearly demonstrates that such State plan does not meet the bill’s requirements. The U.S. Department of Education must conduct a peer review comprised of a variety of experts and practitioners with school-level and classroom experience. If a State plan receives disapproval, the bill maintains the State’s right to an opportunity for a hearing and to resubmit a plan for review.

**Maintains reporting of disaggregated data** – The bill maintains annual reporting of disaggregated data of groups of children, which provides valuable information about whether all students are achieving and whether schools are meeting the particular needs of low-income students, students of color, students with disabilities, and English learners.

**Affirms state control over standards** – The bill affirms that states decide what academic standards they will adopt, without interference from Washington. The federal government may not mandate or incentivize states to adopt or maintain any particular set of standards, including Common Core. States will be free to decide what academic standards they will maintain in their states.

**TITLE II –**

**Helps states support teachers**– The bill provides resources to states and school districts to implement various activities to support teachers, principals, and other educators, including allowable uses of funds for high quality induction programs for new teachers, ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers, and programs to recruit new educators to the profession.

**Ends federal mandates on evaluations, allows states to innovate** - The bill allows, but does not require, states to develop and implement teacher evaluation systems. This bill eliminates the definition of a highly qualified teacher—which has proven onerous to states and school districts—and provides states with the opportunity to define this term.

**TITLE III –**

**Helps states support English learners**– This bill provides resources to states and school districts to establish, implement, and sustain high-quality language instruction educational programs designed to ensure that English learners, including immigrant children and youth, develop both English language proficiency and meet the same challenging academic standards that all children are expected to meet. The bill requires states to measure school districts’ progress in these areas, and provide assistance and support to those in which language instruction educational programs are not effective. The bill also provides incentives to states and school districts to implement policies and practices that will lead to significant improvements in the instruction of English learners, including effective professional development for teachers and parent and community

engagement practices. The bill affirms the state’s responsibility to establish and implement statewide entrance and exit procedures for English learner programs, and provides additional information to states and school districts to help meet the needs of long-term English learners and English learners with a disability.

**TITLE IV –**

**Requires community-based needs assessments to better target funding**– This bill requires school districts to consult with parents, teachers, school leaders, specialized instructional support staff, and other community and local government stakeholders in the planning and implementation of comprehensive programs to improve students’ safety, health, well-being and academic achievement during and after the school day. As part of the planning process, districts must conduct a needs assessment that takes into account measures or indicators of school quality, climate and safety, discipline, and additional risk factors in the community in order to better target funding based on district-level needs.

**Affirms state responsibility for supporting the coordination and implementation of high-quality programs and initiatives** – This bill affirms a State’s responsibility to identify and eliminate barriers to the coordination and integration of programs, initiatives, and funding streams, and provide technical assistance and training in order to disseminate best practices, so that school districts can better meet the needs of their students and foster a positive school climate.

**TITLE V –**

**Updates and strengthens charter school programs**– This bill updates and strengthens charter school programs by combining two existing programs into one Charter Schools Program, consisting of three grant competitions:

- **High-Quality Charter Schools:** Grants to State entities to start new charter schools and to replicate or expand high-quality charter schools, including by developing facilities, hiring and preparing teachers, and providing transportation.

- **Facilities Financing Assistance:** Grants to public or private nonprofit entities to demonstrate innovative methods of enhancing credit to finance the acquisition, construction, or renovation of facilities for charter schools.

- **Replication and Expansion:** As part of national activities, grants to charter management organizations to replicate or expand high-quality charter schools.

The bill also provides incentives for states to adopt stronger charter school authorizing practices, increases charter school transparency and improves community engagement in the implementation and operation of each charter school receiving funds to ensure charter school success.

**Prioritizes grants to evidence-based magnet school programs** – This bill prioritizes grants to evidence-based magnet school programs, including inter-district and regional magnet programs, and provides opportunities to expand magnet school programs with a demonstrated record of success. It also requires magnet school programs to assess, monitor, and evaluate the impact of the activities to improve socioeconomic and racial integration and student achievement.

**TITLE VI –**

**Supports rural schools** – This bill supports rural schools by providing more flexible use of federal funding to enable rural districts to more effectively implement programs, and maintains the authorization of the Small, Rural School Achievement Program (SRSA) and the Rural and Low-Income School (RLIS) program. Additionally, it allows for dual eligible districts, those eligible for both SRSA and RLIS, to choose which program they would like to apply for funding. Under current law, districts that are eligible for SRSA but do not receive funding, are still ineligible for RLIS.

**TITLE VII –**

**Supports programs for American Indian and Alaska Native students** – This bill provides formula grants and competitive grants to support local development of programs for American Indian and Alaska Native students. This bill fosters greater coordination and local community involvement with schools and tribes in the delivery of programs for all Native American students.

**TITLE VIII –**

**Updates the Impact Aid formula** – This bill includes language included in *The National Defense Authorization Act* that replaces the complicated, outdated Impact Aid formula with a simple, objective calculation for program eligibility. This removes the subjectivity from the program and will speed-up payments to school districts across the country.

**TITLE IX –**

**Improves Maintenance of Effort requirements** – The bill maintains important fiscal protections of federal dollars but provides additional flexibility for states and school districts to meet maintenance of effort requirements, which help ensure that federal dollars supplement state and local education dollars.

**Prohibits federal government from imposing additional requirements on states seeking waivers**– This bill prohibits the Secretary from mandating additional requirements for states or school districts seeking waivers from federal law. The bill also limits the Secretary’s authority to disapprove a waiver request.

**TITLE X –**

**Ensures homeless students have access to critical supports to improve school stability** – This bill recognizes the unique challenges that homeless students face and provides the necessary supports for homeless students to enroll, attend, and succeed in school. In particular, the bill ensures that school district liaisons have the necessary time and training to fulfill their responsibilities, increases support for unaccompanied youths, and improves provisions designed to increase school stability for homeless students. The bill also ensures that homeless youth have access to all services provided by the state and school districts, including charter and magnet schools, summer school, career and technical education, advanced placement courses, and online learning opportunities.

5

**EARLY CHILDHOOD –**

**Ensures that federal funds may be used for early education programs** – This bill ensures that Federal funds can be allocated for early childhood education, by clarifying that states, school districts, and schools can spend ESEA dollars to improve early childhood education programs. These provisions apply to various titles including Title I, Title II (supports for teachers and school leaders) and Title III (programs serving English learners).