



News Release

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MICHIGAN PLAN TO MOVE SCHOOLS FORWARD IS APPROVED BY THE U.S. SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

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LANSING – Michigan’s plan to implement the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was approved Tuesday evening by U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos.

DeVos said it was a pleasure working with the staff at the Michigan Department of Education on the review of the state’s plan.

“Please accept my congratulations for Michigan’s approved consolidated state plan,” DeVos wrote in her approval letter to State Superintendent Brian Whiston. “Thank you for the important work that you and your staff are doing to support the transition to the ESSA and most importantly to lead Michigan’s students to achieve at high levels.”

The plan was designed to do what is best for Michigan and Michigan’s children, Whiston said, based on input from thousands of stakeholders. It was built to tightly align with Michigan’s goals and strategies to become a Top 10 education state in 10 years.

“We will continue to move forward now in making Michigan a Top 10 education state in 10 years,” Whiston said. “Thousands of stakeholders in Michigan helped build the components of our ESSA plan. It is designed by Michigan, for Michigan’s students and educators. We appreciate working with the U.S. Department of Education to get this dynamic plan approved. The pieces are in place now, and prepared to be implemented and succeed.”

Whiston said Michigan’s ESSA plan has a “whole child” focus; will have less student testing; focuses on student academic growth; institutes a Partnership Model for improving low-performing schools; has a school accountability system tied to the Top 10 in 10 Strategic Plan; gives schools more flexibility on how they choose to improve; and gives schools greater ownership in how they follow their own plans.

What will be new with Michigan’s ESSA plan:

- A Parent Transparency Dashboard is being developed to give parents a clearer understanding of where their child’s school is performing on things like student achievement, academic growth, attendance, and graduation.

- It has a well-rounded and whole child focus. Academics in the core subjects, as well as access to the arts, libraries, and physical education are key. Physical, social, and emotional health and support, with assistance from counselors, social workers, and health professionals also are included in the state’s commitment.
- It is supportive, and not punitive. Michigan’s accountability system no longer will be a top-down hammer for low-achieving schools. It will identify “Comprehensive Support Schools” and “Targeted Support Schools” and provide varying levels of support and assistance.
- It continues the Partnership Model that the state has instituted to help schools and districts most in need – developing locally-driven solutions and measures of success, with the help of other state, local, and regional partners.
- Every school will be conducting a Comprehensive Needs Assessment to study their resources and data, to find their school’s needs and gaps, and develop a School Improvement Plan, based on the results of that process.
- There will be greater focus on developing the best educators, providing targeted professional development for teachers; honoring and lifting up Michigan educators; creating a stronger teacher preparation and development system with Michigan colleges and universities and other partners.

Following months of public input, the Michigan Department of Education submitted this past spring its plan for meeting the requirements of ESSA, which replaced the previous No Child Left Behind Act. Amendments were made as a result of federal peer review and input from the U.S. Department of Education.

“This ESSA plan is a key component of making Michigan a Top 10 education state in 10 years,” Whiston said. “Educators, parents, legislators and community members across the state devoted significant time and effort to this plan.

“We appreciate those individuals and groups who were genuine and supportive of everyone’s efforts to come together for Michigan students and educators to achieve and succeed,” he added. “There were outliers who had different opinions, and they were heard. In the end, the plan that Secretary DeVos has approved reflects a positive partnership of the education stakeholders.”

The Every Student Succeeds Act was signed into federal law on Dec. 10, 2015, replacing the No Child Left Behind Act. This law represents a shift from broad federal oversight of primary and secondary education to greater flexibility and decision-making at the state and local levels. ESSA requires states to develop plans that address standards, assessments, school and district accountability, and special help for struggling schools.

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