



Making ESSA Work for Early Learning in Your State

Toolkit for Including Early Learning in State ESSA Plans April 5, 2017

The Early Learning staff from MACC@WestEd anticipated opportunities within the new law for states and LEAs to improve early learning quality and expand access. When initial review of the law revealed few direct references to early learning but many possible openings, MACC@WestEd staff recognized that early learning staff in states would need ideas for how to work with the law as they developed state plans. In 2016, MACC@WestEd developed a resource document for that purpose—*Early Childhood Requirements and Opportunities*, and shared the document with states in the mid-Atlantic region. After seeing the wide range of options, PA staff were eager to hear how their colleague agencies in other states were gathering stakeholder input and approaching early learning planning—especially to help them advocate for the place of early learning in state plans. MACC@WestEd staff held discussions with OCDEL and other state education agency (SEA) teams in the region to determine how best to facilitate such an exchange. We determined that a roundtable of key staff from each state, drawn from across agencies and offices within each state, would provide a rich forum to share ideas. Knowing that the Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) were also working on similar topics, MACC@WestEd invited representatives from those organizations to participate in these meetings as well.

On December 9, 2016, and February 14, 2017, MACC@WestEd conducted gatherings of early learning teams from the states in the region to share how they were approaching various PreK-grade 3 opportunities and requirements within the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA). These meetings focused on helping states to systematically identify opportunities within ESSA that map to states' strategic plans and address issues of quality and access. The meeting agendas were built upon *Early Childhood Requirements and Opportunities*.

The goals of both the initial session and its continuation were the same: share strategies and approaches across states; provide clarifications about ESSA provisions, as needed; encourage states to raise questions, problem solve, and generally brainstorm options; and identify areas where MACC@WestEd technical assistance could be helpful.

Based on discussions with SEA staff and our experience in preparing the guidebook, MACC@WestEd staff drafted an agenda and support materials to facilitate engagement among all participants. From working with the ESSA law ourselves, we understood the complexity and immense amount of detail in the law, including the potential interconnections across Titles. We prepared meeting materials to facilitate critical analysis of the opportunities in the law as they link to individual states' priorities. Those resources include breakdowns of the "big picture" to facilitate cross-referencing of key ideas; background and discussion guides for the sections of the law most relevant to early learning that state staff could use with colleagues and with LEAs; and examples that could be included in SEA and LEA plans.

Participants in the convenings found the materials very helpful as tools to use in their own states and encouraged the MACC@WestEd to share them more broadly. Those meeting materials are included in this toolkit for use by stakeholders in the mid-Atlantic and other states, as well as the many technical assistance providers and associations that are offering advice on ESSA implementation. SEA staff may find the materials helpful in structuring their ongoing planning with other state agency colleagues as they develop and refine consolidated state plans. The discussion guides will also be useful as SEAs communicate with LEAs about ESSA fundamentals in early learning and encourage LEAs to consider how best to incorporate early learning plans.

Toolkit Contents

The following items are designed as stand-alone tools that can be used as is or adapted by state agencies:

Map: The Integration of Early Learning Opportunities
Discussion Guides: Titles I, II, III, IV, IX

These toolkit materials are built upon our earlier publication, *ESSA: Early Childhood Requirements and Opportunities*, which provides more detailed analysis of the requirements and opportunities under ESSA. (Available on-line at <http://macc-atwested.org/new-resource-essa-early-childhood-requirements-and-opportunities/>).



Map: The Integration of Early Learning Opportunities

To facilitate discussion and identify areas in the ESSA law that were conducive to including early learning, we developed the *ESSA Map: The Integration of Early Education Opportunities* based on the initial consolidated state plan template from the U.S. Department of Education.

ESSA Map: The Integration of Early Education Opportunities

| Consolidated Plan Themes | Explicit Early Learning Connections | Selected Other Opportunities |
|--|---|--|
| <p>Consultation and Coordination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meaningful consultation with stakeholders in development of plan - Leveraging of system resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Title I: Early Learning Coordination (SEA and LEA coordination with Head Start, CCDBG) - Use State Advisory Councils | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduce financial/regulatory barriers caused by multiple programs - Encouragement to subgrant to community providers |
| <p>Challenging Academic Standards and Academic Assessments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Content standards/English proficiency standards - High quality academic assessments - Review/monitoring/TA support for LEA | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PreK-3 alignment of standards/curriculum - PreK-3 assessment review and audits/progress monitoring - Use of data to inform practice - Integrate early childhood data into statewide longitudinal data systems |
| <p>Accountability, Support, and Improvement for Schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Indicators for statewide reporting - Identification of comprehensive and targeted support and improvement schools - Support for/differentiated TA for school improvement - Evidence-based interventions - Review/monitoring LEA comprehensive support and improvement plans | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Title I: Preschool Participation (Report Cards) - Title I: LEA Plans for Encouraging Early Learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Title I: School quality or student success indicator; English proficiency indicator - Title I: School improvement plans and/ evidence-based interventions |
| <p>Supporting Excellent Educators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Educator development, retention, advancement system - State-level strategies for supporting high quality educators - PD for specific learning needs - Educator preparation - Educator equity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Title I and II: LEA use of funds for joint PD related to transition; instruction /measurement - Title II: LEARN grants - Title III: Support for English learners, including national PD | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Title II SEA set aside: Support for teacher preparation/development; - Title II LEA: PD, pay differentiation, induction, career paths; hiring teachers, parent engagement - Ensure low-income/minority children not served by ineffective teachers |
| <p>Supporting All Students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategies for supporting academic and non-academic needs of all students - School conditions for learning - Promoting parent/family engagement - Migrant, homeless, rural and low income children, English learners, children in foster care, children with disabilities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Equitable access to PreK - Support PreK to K transitions - Title IV, part A: Well-rounded education - Title IV, parts B, C, E: 21st Century schools, Promise neighborhoods - Title IX: PreK included in homeless - Title IX: Preschool Dev. Grants | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opportunities for well-rounded education - Improved school conditions, including reducing overuse of harmful discipline practices - Effective family engagement practices - Magnet/charter schools. |

Note: Items listed in **BOLD** have prepared discussion guides.

Discussion Guides

These guides each provide a brief overview of a key aspect of ESSA within the relevant Title, and provide space for note-taking and organizing ideas. The discussion guides/note pages can be used to support high quality early childhood education and access to services. Discussion guides/notes sheets are included for:

- Title I: Early Learning Services Coordination
- Title I: LEA Plans for Encouraging Early Learning
- Title I: Preschool Participation
- Title I: School Quality Indicators
- Title I: School Improvement Plans
- Title I: Parent and Family Engagement
- Title II: LEA Plans for High Quality Educators
- Title II: LEARN Grants
- Title II: SEA Set Aside
- Title III: Language Instruction for English Learners and Immigrant Students
- Title IV, Part A: Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants
- Title IV, Parts B, C, E: 21st Century Schools
- Title IX: Preschool Development Grants

Title I: Early Learning Services Coordination

Each SEA must demonstrate how it has coordinated early learning services with agencies implementing CCDBG and Head Start. Sec. 1111(a)(1)

Opportunities: The intent is to coordinate with the broader early childhood stakeholder community to ensure that Title I plans reflect larger state goals for early learning.

- *What types of new coordination have occurred for ESSA planning?*
- *In what ways is the SEA planning to encourage coordination for LEA plans?*
- *What strategies is the SEA promoting for leveraging Title I and II resources?*
- *How is the SEA promoting effective transition between preschool and K?*

...Possible strategies?

...Remaining questions?

...Next steps?



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Title I: LEA Plans for Encouraging Early Learning

LEAs may reserve funds to provide early childhood programs for Title I eligible children (e.g., district or school operated preschool, services for eligible children through coordination with other provider, extended day, comprehensive services). Sec. 1113(C)(5) and Sec. 1007(3)(A)(5)

LEA using Title I funds must **coordinate** with other early childhood providers in the community, implement **transition** to kindergarten plans for all preschoolers, and Title I provided services must comply with **performance standards in the Head Start Act** (specifically the curriculum and learning environment standards).

A school that operates a **schoolwide program** may use funds to establish or enhance preschool programs for children who are under 6 years of age. Sec. 1114(c)

- *To what extent does Title I currently support early learning? Do you have models to build upon?*
- *What types of uses do you anticipate, e.g. extending current programs to full day, district-operated programs, and professional development for preschool providers?*
- *How will SEA define, promote, and support coordination and transition activities at local level?*
- *What supports will be needed to assure compliance with Head Start performance standards?*

...Possible strategies?

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Title I: Preschool Participation

State report cards will include the number and percent of students enrolled in preschool programs. Sec. 1111(h)(1)(C)(viii)(II)(aa)

Opportunities: Develop data for needs assessments/decision making for other opportunities within ESSA.

- *Does your state already include similar reporting?*
- *Are you planning to ask LEAs to report about all children or only those in state-funded preschool programs? ...report by type of setting?*
- *Are you planning to request reporting of subgroup breakouts?*

...Possible strategies?

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Title I: School Quality Indicators

The statewide accountability system will include at least one indicator of school quality or student success in addition to the required academic achievement indicators. The indicator must be: supported by research that it helps increase student learning; that it allows for meaningful differentiation; and that it is valid, reliable, and comparable. Indicators may vary by grade span. Sec. 1111(c)(4)(B)(v)(1)

Opportunities: Indicators for readiness for K; classroom quality ratings; and, capacity/certification of early learning workforce

- *Are you considering a school quality indicator related to early learning?*
- *If so, how did you choose? What's the research link?*
- *What other types of quality indicators are your states considering?*

...Possible strategies?

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Title I: School Improvement Plans

Comprehensive Support and Improvement and Targeted Support and Improvement district/school plans are designed to improve student outcomes—based on needs assessment and including aligned evidence-based interventions and strategies to address resource inequities. Sec. 1111 (d)(1)(B) and (d)(2)(B)

Opportunities: Encourage attention to access to high quality early learning programs in needs assessments. Include early learning in improvement plan. SEAs identify, recommend, and approve evidence-based strategies. LEAs are required to work with outside intermediary organizations that have expertise in evidence-based strategies.

- *Is the SEA likely to use this avenue as a way to press for attention to early learning?*
- *Will SEA early learning staff be involved in reviewing, approving, monitoring plans?*
- *How will the SEA identify, limit, approve, and promote evidence-based strategies and interventions for early learning?*
- *Are there particular evidence-based strategies, programs, interventions that the SEA would likely promote for use in school improvement plans?*

Evidence-Based Levels in ESSA

1 Strong--at least 1 well-designed/well-implemented experimental study

2 Moderate--at least 1 well-designed/well-implemented quasi-experimental study

3 Promising--at least 1 well-designed/well-implemented correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias

4 Under Evaluation—demonstrates rationale based on high-quality research or positive evaluation of likelihood of improving student outcomes plus efforts to examine the effects

...Possible strategies?

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Title I: Parent and Family Engagement

SEA will provide LEAs and schools with information about effective parent and family engagement strategies. Sec. 1111(g)(f)

LEAs shall reserve at least 1 percent of Title I allocation to assist schools in carrying out parent and family engagement activities Sec. 1116(2)(C)(i)(A) LEAs are expected to build school capacity in parent involvement and coordinate strategies with other federal and state programs. Sec. 1112(b)(7) 1116 (2) (B, C)

LEAs are encouraged to subgrant with experienced community based providers that have a record of success in engaging families. Sec. 1116(2)(D)(I, iv)

Opportunities: Coordinated outreach efforts to families/communities; collaborate with community-based service providers with ties to special populations.

- *Has the SEA established resources on effective parent/family engagement strategies?*
- *What types of statewide activities will the SEA employ to support LEAs?*
- *Who are the key state-level and community based providers who can assist with outreach to parents/families?*
- *How can SEA help early learning advocates extend their experience with family/community services to LEAs?*

...Possible strategies?

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Title II: LEA Plans for High Quality Educators

LEAs receive Title II subgrants for a variety of purposes including professional development, including addressing transition to elementary school; teacher induction and mentoring; reducing class size by hiring additional teachers; and engagement of parents, family and community partners. Sec. 2103(b)(3), (B)(i-vi) and (D) and (E)(G)(J)

Opportunities: Increase knowledge of teachers and school leaders about early learning, organize joint learning with preschool providers, work on transition, provide training in assessments and other tools, provide coaching, assist families in supporting children's development.

In developing plans, LEAs consult with private early childhood providers and coordinate with other PD providers. Sec. 2102(b)

- *How will SEA encourage LEAs to consider early learning needs when developing Title II plans?*
- *What are statewide priorities that might inform/align with LEA Title II plans?*
- *To what extent will SEA identify early learning PD priorities?*

...Possible strategies?

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Title II: LEARN Grants

The purpose of the LEARN program is to improve academic achievement in reading and writing in early education through grade 12, with specific focus on evidence-based programs for students most in need. States must use at least 15% of funds for programs for birth through kindergarten entry; and provide an assurance of priority for subgrants to entities that serve children from birth through age 5 who are from families with income levels at or below 200 percent of the Federal poverty line. Sec. 2222(d) and Sec. 2223(a)

Competitive priority is given to SEAs that use grants for evidence-based activities. States can reserve up to 5% for statewide activities including providing technical assistance in designing and implementing literacy programs, coordinating with institutions of higher education to improve pre-service courses, updating licensure/certification, and providing information on promising instructional practices. Among other requirements, states must conduct a needs assessment to identify the most significant gaps/inequities in literacy performance. Sec. 2222(e)(f)

- *Subgrantees may include early childhood programs outside of the public school system. How will K-12 coordinate with these entities?*
- *How can the needs assessment be leveraged, for example, in stakeholder support and family engagement?*
- *How will SEA identify the evidence-based practices called for in this section?*

...Possible strategies?

...Remaining questions?

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Title II: SEA Set Aside

5% of state formula grant can be used to carry out statewide activities related to improving educator quality.

SEA can also use an additional 3% for state activities to improve principal preparation.

Opportunities: Improving certification or preparation programs; improving educator evaluation and support systems; developing career advancement initiatives; induction/ mentoring programs for new educators; professional development to support principals in becoming effective instructional leaders; joint efforts to support transition to elementary school.

- *Which statewide early learning needs could be addressed through the Title II set-aside?*
- *How might SEA target resources to support preparation of PreK – 3rd grade teachers?*
- *How can the SEA use the set-aside in conjunction with other ESSA requirements and opportunities, e.g. preparation for LEARN grants?*
- *What are the opportunities for coordination with child care and Head Start?*

...Possible strategies?

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Title III: Language Instruction for English Learners and Immigrant Students

Title III may be used for professional development to improve the skills and knowledge of teachers of English learners, including preschool teachers and school leaders. Sections 3102, 3115(c)(2), 3115(d)(4)

States may reserve 5% for state activities including professional development and technical assistance. Sec. 3111(b)

LEA must coordinate activities and share data with Head Start agencies and other early childhood providers. Sec. 3116(b)(4)

Opportunities: Establishing programs to support children's learning of English; professional development for educators to support preschool-aged English learners; placement of bilingual early childhood educators; supporting screening and assessment for young learners; support families in assisting children's language development.

- *How will the SEA provide leadership to highlight potential uses of Title III resources for preschool providers?*
- *Does the SEA have plans for supporting assessment of language needs of PreK students, including support in using non-native language assessments?*
- *What is known about the statewide needs re: education of preschool English learners?*
- *To what extent do resources exist in the state to provide support to LEAs with English learners?*

...Possible strategies?

...Remaining questions?

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Title IV, Part A: Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants

Title IV, Part A functions as a flexible block grant based on the Title I grant formula and is potentially one of the largest resource pools within ESSA. States may reserve up to 5% of the State's allocations for state-level activities. State plans should include coordination with existing resources and programs. Examples of state activities include eliminating barriers to coordination, supporting LEAs in their plans, ensuring equitable access, providing information about evidence-based programs, disseminating best practices. LEAs that receive more than \$30,000 must conduct comprehensive needs assessment every three years to inform plans. Sections 4103, 4104.

Opportunities: Activities are authorized in three broad areas of capacity development:

- (1) Providing students with a well-rounded education (e.g., music, art, physical education, acceleration) Section 4107
 - (2) Supporting safe and healthy students (e.g., nutrition, health, training on trauma-informed practices, counseling, including engagement of parents/families, establishing learning environments essential for school readiness, child sexual abuse awareness and prevention, plans to reduce exclusionary discipline, positive behavioral interventions and supports, coordination with community resources) Section 4108
 - (3) Supporting the effective use of technology (e.g., professional development, devices) Section 4109
- *What are the early learning priorities that might have specific appeal for the SEA allocation, e.g. coordination with community resources, reductions in exclusionary disciplinary actions?*
 - *How will SEAs encourage LEAs to include early learners in their programming plans?*
 - *Are there priority early learning uses for Title IV A funds at the LEA level that can be coordinated with existing statewide initiatives, e.g. behavioral training, nutrition campaign?*

...Possible strategies?

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Title IV, Parts B, C, E: 21st Century Schools

Title IV, Part B provides funds to LEAs and community learning centers for academic enrichment and support which can provide opportunities to families for meaningful engagement in their children's education, including opportunities for literacy development. These programs are targeted at children and families of children who will attend schools eligible for schoolwide programs. States may reserve 5% for capacity building. Sections 4203, 4205.

Title IV, Part C clarifies that federally funded charter school programs may serve early childhood. Section 4302, Section 4301 (2) (h).

Title IV, Part E makes available grants to statewide organizations to provide training and technical assistance in effective family engagement programs and practices, including strengthening school-community-parent partnerships. Federal funding is for one full year followed by non-federal matching. Section 4501, 4502.

- Does the SEA have relationships with a network of family support providers? What can the SEA do to prepare family support providers for the opportunities within ESSA?
- Does the state have good models of charters, magnet schools, afterschool providers that encompass early learning services and/or parent involvement services?
- What are the avenues for SEAs to provide information to LEAs/community centers about fundable activities that support parents of young children?

...Possible strategies?

...Remaining questions?

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Additional Resources to Support Work on ESSA

- CCSSO is compiling information on all aspects of the state plans as they become available -
http://www.ccsso.org/Resources/Programs/Every_Student_Succeeds_Act.html.
- CCSSO developed a toolkit to assist SEAs as they work on engagement -
http://www.ccsso.org/Resources/Programs/Every_Student_Succeeds_Act/ESSA_Meeting_In_A_Box.html.
- CEELo website page on ESSA provides a range of resources
(<http://ceelo.org/essa/>)