



COVID-19 Guidance: Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Federal ESSA Waiver

Due to the extraordinary circumstances created by COVID-19 and resulting school closures, the U.S. Department of Education notified states of an optional waiver for the 2019-2020 school year. The waiver allows Iowa to waive several requirements including: the assessment requirements in section 1111(b)(2) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by the ESSA; the accountability and school identification requirements in ESEA sections 1111(c)(4) and 1111(d)(2)(C)-(D); and certain reporting requirements related to assessments and accountability in ESEA section 1111(h).

Iowa submitted this waiver to the U.S. Department of Education and received approval on April 1, 2020. This allows Iowa to waive the following:

1. The requirement to assess students in mathematics, reading/language arts (grades 3-8 and not less than one time in grades 9-12), and science (at least one time in grades 3-5, 6-9, and 10-12) for the 2019-2020 year. This includes assessments for all students, including students with significant cognitive disabilities and English learners.
2. Designations for schools in need of Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) are based on 2019-2020 data.
3. The reporting requirement for specific measures of the ESSA Accountability Index that are provided to the public via the Iowa School Performance Profile including: Iowa state assessment in mathematics or reading/language arts, percent of students assessed/not assessed, English learner proficiency, Conditions for Learning Survey, Postsecondary Readiness Index, and any progress toward long-term goals/interim progress.

Support and Public Comment

In addition, Iowa must:

1. Continue to support schools already designated in need of Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) or TSI in the 2020-2021 year, as approved in Iowa's ESSA plan; and
2. Ensure there is a process for public comment as close to the submission of the waiver as possible. The waiver was submitted and approved on April 1, 2020. Comments are due via email to ESSA@iowa.gov by April 30.

ESSA Accountability Index

The approved federal ESSA waiver allows Iowa a one-year waiver of the assessment and reporting requirements under the ESSA. This includes all measures within the ESSA Accountability Index reflected in the Iowa School Performance Profile, with the exception of graduation. Therefore, the following assessments will not be implemented in the 2019-2020 year, and results will not be reported in the 2020-2021 year:

- Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP),
- English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century (ELPA21),
- Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM), and
- Conditions for Learning Survey (CfL) – student version or optional parent/teacher version.

This includes the alternate assessment for students with significant cognitive disabilities. This does not include graduation or other measures outside of Iowa's ESSA Accountability Index such as: rates of suspensions/expulsions, school-related arrests, referrals to law enforcement, chronic absenteeism, incidences of violence including bullying/harassment, number and percentage of students enrolled in preschool programs, number and percentage of students enrolled in accelerated coursework to earn postsecondary credit while still in high school, professional qualifications of teachers in the state and related data, and per-pupil expenditures and related information.

In addition, the following will not be calculated for reporting in the 2020-2021 year:

- Participation in State Assessments,
- Academic Achievement,
- Student Growth,
- Progress in Achieving English Language Proficiency,
- Average Scale Score,
- Conditions for Learning,
- Postsecondary Readiness, and
- Any progress toward Iowa's long-term goals and interim progress.

Additional Assessment Guidance

For additional guidance on state assessments, please see the [Federally Mandated Assessment guidance document](#).

Designations

The approved federal ESSA waiver allows Iowa a one-year waiver of the requirement to identify schools in need of TSI based on 2019-2020 data. Therefore, there will be **no**:

- Additional TSI schools identified in December of 2020,
- Year 1 related training/supports,
- Changes in the Iowa School Performance Profile in 2020-2021 based on 2019-2020 data, and
- Need to publicly report data as there will be no new data to report.

Impact on Currently Designated Schools

This does not impact currently designated schools. Those schools identified in need of either Comprehensive or Targeted Support and Improvement will continue with their current designations and have access to all training and support that is able to be supported via electronic/distance options.

Training and Support

The approved federal ESSA waiver requires continued support to schools already designated in need of Comprehensive or Targeted Support and Improvement in the 2020-2021 year, as approved in Iowa's plan. All regional training and conferences have been either canceled or postponed through June 2020.

2019-2020 Support

Support for the remainder of the 2019-2020 year includes:

1. **Data Review** completion. Schools should have already accessed and completed the Data Review online module for 2019-2020.
2. **Self-Assessment of MTSS Implementation (SAMI)** review and revision within the Consolidated Accountability and Support Application (CASA). Schools may access the online module or training supported via distance options. SAMI review and revision is *optional* for the 2019-2020 year.

3. **ESSA Action Plan** review and revision within CASA. Schools may access the online module or training supported via distance options at this time. ESSA Action Plan review and revision is *optional* for the 2019-2020 year.

Postponed Supports

The following support has been postponed through June 2020:

1. **Monthly/Quarterly Check-Ins** with AEA-DE improvement consultants. At this time, check-ins are scheduled to resume in August 2020.
2. **Iowa Learning Academy** conference in June. Iowa Learning Academy was formerly known as the ESSA June Institute, and now includes the Special Education Symposium and Learning Supports conference. This is an in-person conference hosted at the Iowa Events Center.
3. **District Site Visits** for districts with one or more schools designated in need of Comprehensive Support and Improvement.

2020-2021 Support

Support in the 2020-2021 year includes:

1. **Data Review** online module completion will be *optional*, as there will be no new data reflected in the Iowa School Performance Profile.
2. **SAMI** review and revision within CASA. Comprehensive schools will be required to attend regional training or contact their AEA to provide direct support to complete review and revision of the SAMI within CASA. TSI schools will be required to review and revise the SAMI within CASA and are encouraged to attend regional training or contact their AEA for direct support.
3. **ESSA Action Plan** review and revision within CASA. CSI schools will be required to attend regional training or contact their AEA to provide direct support to complete review and revision of their Action Plan within CASA. TSI schools will be required to review and revise the Action Plan within CASA and are encouraged to attend regional training or contact their AEA for direct support.
4. **Monthly/Quarterly Check-Ins** with AEA-DE improvement consultants. The monthly check-in requirement will resume with CSI building leadership teams and AEA-DE improvement consultants starting in August 2020. The quarterly check-in requirement will resume with TSI building leadership teams and AEA-DE improvement consultants starting in August 2020.
5. **Iowa Learning Academy** conference in June. Information about this required conference will be provided at a later time.
6. **District Site Visits** for districts with one or more schools designated in need of Comprehensive Support and Improvement. More information about required site visits will be provided at a later time.

Questions and Additional Guidance

If you have questions, please contact your [school improvement consultant](#). If they are unable to assist you, they will connect you with the appropriate person. For additional COVID-19 guidance and information, please visit the Department's [COVID-19 webpage](#).