

Getting ESSA Right

Linda Darling-Hammond, President and CEO of the Learning Policy Institute and Charles E. Ducommun Professor of Education Emeritus at Stanford University, testified on July 14, 2016 before the full Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee at the hearing "ESSA Implementation: Perspectives from Education Stakeholders on Proposed Regulations."

In her remarks, Dr. Darling-Hammond stressed that the regulations for the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) must allow for accountability that leads to equity and improvement, by providing transparency and clarity for action, both for schools that are struggling in certain regards and for all schools to continually improve. At the same time, it must allow for the innovations in learning, teaching, and schooling that are necessary for our national success

Highlighting innovative work underway in a number of states, her testimony provided recommendations on how the final regulations can support states in developing, implementing, and improving upon accountability systems which will ensure that all students develop the skills necessary to succeed in the 21st century.

Among the key points:

- Allow states to develop useful dashboards of information that provide transparency and guidance for productive action, and do not require accountability decisions to be based on a single summative score.
- Allow states to use additional indicators of school quality, beyond those that are federally required, in meaningful ways that recognize and incentivize schools for their progress on these measures. These can include access to a rich curriculum, a productive school climate, and opportunities to learn.
- Allow states to use continuous measures of achievement (such as scale scores and movement across performance categories), rather than merely the percentage of students identified as "proficient," in order to better measure progress and equity gaps.

- Ensure sufficient time for states to plan and launch thoughtful and effective accountability systems that incorporate stakeholder feedback and have the capacity to drive effective strategies for improvement in schools.

“The Department should allow states to make their additional indicators of school quality and opportunity to learn important and meaningful in their state accountability systems,” Dr. Darling-Hammond noted in her prepared remarks, adding that there should not be provisions that “would in effect discourage the use of these potentially powerful indicators for states and rollback community efforts underway to address the root cause of educational inequity.

“The Department’s final rules should support states in their efforts to implement accountability systems that advance equity by highlighting and measuring what matters most for student success and what provides the most useful levers for school improvement.”

For more information, download Dr. Darling-Hammond’s [full written testimony](#) and the [LPI publication](#), *Pathways to New Accountability through the Every Student Succeeds Act*, and watch the July 14, 2016 [Senate HELP hearing](#).

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About the Learning Policy Institute

The Institute conducts and communicates independent, high-quality research to improve education policy and practice. Working with policymakers, researchers, educators, community groups, and others, we seek to advance evidence-based policies that support empowering and equitable learning for each and every child. Learn more by visiting <http://www.learningpolicyinstitute.org/>.